



PHD

**Intercultural Identity Development through Study Abroad Programmes: An
Ethnographic Case Study of Algerian Students in a UK University**

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**Intercultural Identity Development through Study Abroad
Programmes: An Ethnographic Case Study of Algerian Students in a
UK University**

A dissertation submitted by Amina Guerriche in fulfilment of the
requirement of the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Education

November 2019

Declaration of Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled 'Intercultural Identity Development through Study Abroad Programmes: An Ethnographic Case Study of Algerian Students in a UK University' has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than the University of Bath. I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research that has been written by me. All information sources and literature used are indicated in this thesis.

The submission of this thesis is in the fulfilment of the requirement of the Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Bath.

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Thesis abstract

During the last decade, higher education institutions and governments have been increasing their efforts to incentivize study abroad participation. These efforts are grounded in the belief that study abroad participation nurtures culturally competent individuals who can effectively function in today's multicultural environments (Kehl & Morris, 2007). Study abroad programmes are said to have the potential to grant intercultural immersion opportunities that students perceive as having different cultural norms and practices and which thereby lead to intercultural development and transformation. While there is considerable body of research regarding students' experiences abroad, evidence that support this claim appears to be limited by a range of methodological weaknesses including small homogenous samples, an absence of a rigorous ethnographic research strategy. In particular, very few studies have looked Algerian students on study abroad programmes (with the notable exception of Doring et al, 2010).

Much of the literature on study abroad outcomes focuses on the linguistic proficiency gains, and the development of intercultural communication skills (e.g. Nagy, 2008). A smaller number of studies have looked at the influence of study-abroad programmes on attitude change towards different cultures (Killick, 2017; Sutton & Robin, 2010), and very few on the impact on the students' intercultural identity (Kim, 2001). In these studies, cases of Chinese, American, Australian, and European students were taken. To date, no research has explored the development of Algerian students' intercultural identity during the study abroad experience. Furthermore, previous studies which investigated the intercultural development of Algerians have been conducted in contexts such as France and Germany and tackled virtual learning rather than experiential learning or immigrants' adaptability (Vincent-Jones, 2009; Rocheron, 2005). To date no research has addressed the outcomes of experiential learning by Algerian students in the culturally diverse context of the United Kingdom.

The current study sought to provide new insights on the possible impact that inter-group relations, social contact, and increased cultural exposure may have on the process of intercultural identity development of Algerian students during their sojourn in the UK. The project was informed by the constructionist/interpretivist paradigm and used a qualitative research strategy.

An ethnographic case study design was used to explore the process that students went through to reach an intercultural adaptability and intercultural identity transformation. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, and participant observation. The Interviews were coded and analysed using a thematic analysis deductive approach that was guided by the research questions and theoretical framework. This resulted in the emergence of 4 different themes: intercultural immersion, sociocultural challenges, intercultural interactions, and intercultural identity development.

Students' reactions, perceptions, behaviours, and meaning making were examined. The outcomes of the study abroad experience came both to confirm the claims made in some previous studies regarding the positive outcomes of study abroad programmes, and to challenge some other studies. Based on the results of the present research, it was possible to draw a series of implications for theory, and for educational institutions, government agencies, stakeholders, and policy makers concerned with study abroad programmes and the importance of maximizing of positive outcomes of the study abroad experience.

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List of Abbreviations

SAP: Study Abroad Programme

SIT: Social Identity Theory

CTI: Communicative Theory of Identity

CTCCA: Communicative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

IS: Intercultural Sensitivity

IA: Intercultural Awareness

II: Intercultural Identity

SSI: Semi Structured Interview

EI: Ethnographic Interview

R: Round

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Glossary of Key Terms

This research investigates the development of intercultural identity through the study abroad experience. In doing so, several concepts are used revolving around culture, identity, study abroad, and interculturality. The following table defines the key terms used in this thesis.

Concept	Definition
Sojourner	-People who are relocated to a different culture for a specific time with a plan to return to their home county (e.g., students studying abroad).
Study abroad programme	- A program, usually run through a university, which allows a student to live in a foreign country and attend a foreign university.
Cross-cultural preparedness	- Preparing students to adapt to a specific environment through providing practical information and advice about it. -The individual's cross-cultural preparedness refers to his willingness and ability to alter or adapt his/her behaviour based on the sociocultural context (Dalton, Ernst, Deal, & Leslie, 2002).
Acculturation	- The process by which individuals acquire some aspects of the host culture and alter their perceptions and behaviours accordingly.
Adjustment	-The ability to socioculturally fit in the new cultural environment, and emotionally and psychologically handle the change.
Cultural adaptation	-The process the person goes through to integrate in a new culture and develop a feeling of belongingness to the new environment.
Intercultural knowledge	-The knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable an appropriate and effective functioning within a variety of cultural contexts.
Intercultural	-The acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the

learning	ability of the learner to understand the culture and interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
Intercultural immersion	-The act of being surrounded by the culture of a place (e.g., living in a foreign country). It is an experience that gives an opportunity for a deep understanding of an unfamiliar site.
Cultural diversity	-The sharing of the richness embodied in each of the world's cultures and, therefore, of the links uniting us in the processes of exchange and dialogue (UNESCO, 2009).
Intercultural encounters	-It refers to the interactive engagement between people pertaining to diverse cultural backgrounds. It is an intercultural, socially constructed interactions situated in a particular time, place, and context.
Intercultural communication	-It refers to the communication between people across group, geographical, social, and cultural boundaries. -It is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process, in which people from different cultures create shared meanings. (Lustig & Koester, 2007:46).
Intercultural identity	-It refers to a continuity from the cultural identity as cultural boundaries are extended, perceptions altered, and new systems explored. It links the person to more than one cultural group.
Host environment	-It is the geographical and cultural place welcoming people relocated to it and providing the necessary facilities for their stay.
Stereotypes	-A stereotype is a simplified concept or image and/or a standard that is common to people on another group based on a superficial or mistaken understanding. Stereotypes can be positive and negative and usually occur when one has a minimal knowledge about a group or a culture.

Table 1. Definitions of the research terminology

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Contextualising the Research

The world nowadays is witnessing a great deal of mobility and immigration for a wide variety of reasons ranging from mass travel, globalisation of industry, seeking better life quality, tourism, or expansion of educational exchanges (Ward et al., 2001). This mobility is a sign of progressive accessibility to international opportunities and travel (Trumbull et al., 2001). Consequently, physical distance and geographical boundaries are no longer an obstacle to the exposure to once distant cultures. In the centre of this global mobility, the world is turning to a mosaic of cultural diversities where people easily find themselves outside their cultural comfort zone.

Stemming from the significant increase of migration is the growing interest in exploring intercultural, between-society contact and relations (Markus and Kitayama, 2003; Neyestani, 2005). In addition to permanently resident migrant populations, multinational employees, academics, and international students have become increasingly mobile in the last few decades putting themselves in socioculturally diverse environments. In the case of studying abroad, students are put in an unfamiliar context where it might be difficult to locate themselves within the new cultural frame. However, some researchers point that through cultural exposure and contact with the host community, students can produce better cultural and social insights of new cultures (Pryor & Torrence, 2004). Further, contact and immersion can help students construct an intercultural knowledge about the host culture, which may facilitate their intercultural adjustment and coping (Wenger, 1998).

As students take part in the intercultural exchange and learning processes, their accumulation of intercultural knowledge can help in adjusting their identity to identify themselves with socioculturally different groups (viz. Social identity Theory: Tajfel, 1979). Such detachment from cultural ties can engage the student in the development of intercultural identity. Kim (2008) asserts that the intercultural exposure and interaction process is

what helps in developing intercultural identity. Such process is not a smooth one as the person may face rejection, stress, or culture shock (Berry, 1994; Kim, 1988). This adjustment process is achieved when the individual develops an ability to go beyond categorical stereotypes and appreciate differences as denoting uniqueness and find similarities in human nature among different members of cultural, ethnic, or other social groups (Tian & Lowe, 2014) and this denotes an intercultural identity (Kim, 2008)

However, regardless of the eventual outcomes of the study abroad experience on intercultural identity, the experience of exposure and adjustment to an unfamiliar cultural environment can be stressful and alienating (Kim & Omizo, 2005). Sociocultural and geographical relocation requires individuals to interact with people whose language and culture can be different than their own (Berry, 2006a; Berry and Sam, 2006). For sojourning students, the shift in location entails a varying sociocultural system, which can represent both benefits and perceived risks (Birman and Taylor-Ritzler, 2007; Constantine et al., 2004), especially with regards to identity. Students can be subject of feelings of stress, anxiety, and confusion engendered by exposure to an alien sociocultural environment and display negative or positive intercultural transformation. Hence, there is a need for adequate support and coping strategies so as to buffer the possible negative outcomes of the study abroad experience and help students promote psychological well-being, social fitness (Redmond and Bunyi, 1993) and develop an intercultural identity. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the importance of grasping an understanding of what and how students learn during their study abroad experience and which factors impact their perceptions, adaptability, and intercultural identity.

To adequately address the issue of the impact of the intercultural knowledge accumulated through immersion experiences on intercultural identity, there is a need to more accurately investigate the students' study abroad experience. Furthermore, there is a need to assess how intercultural knowledge and experience can potentially influence the intercultural

development (both negatively and positively) (Smith, 2013). In addition, understanding the context of the study abroad experience, and how students perceive differences and make sense of their experiences and apply their understanding into their lives and future intercultural experiences may alter the present assumptions about the role of study abroad programmes, intercultural learning and contact, international education, and educational policy.

The remainder of the present chapter provides the research scope and the rationale for this research. Further, the research aims and questions are presented, and the key terms used in the study are defined. The chapter concludes by presenting the organisation of the thesis.

1.2. Research scope and rationale

Study abroad programmes are believed to be a means of nurturing intercultural and communicatively competent students within a limited period of time. However, study abroad programmes research shows that the experience of intercultural exposure through studying abroad does not solely entail positive outcomes: some students report no language gains, no intercultural understanding, no adaptability or severe psychological distress while living abroad (Ecke 2013, Jackson 2011). Therefore, according to study abroad programmes literature, intercultural exposure represents an opportunity for intercultural learning and growth (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010) and may also entail confusion and hardships (Sherry, Thomas, & Wing Hong, 2010). Hence, a realistic knowledge about the outcomes of study abroad programmes and an approach that incorporates students' perspectives is desirable. It is acknowledged that numerous studies tried to explore the impact of studying abroad on students' competencies, but the results were limited by the inability to transfer to population who are culturally different and can go through a different process of growth or regression, adaptability or maladaptation.

The Algerian government started in 2014 a large funding programme offering scholarships to 100 Algerian students annually to continue their

doctoral studies in the United Kingdom (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2014). The decision was made to grant students who graduated from their universities with distinction and high averages the chance to pursue their studies in well-known British academic institutions. The government anticipated that studying abroad will enhance academic excellence and improve the quality of education when the scholars return home. In order to introduce students to the British academia and society, the government offered laureates the chance to be enrolled in a pre-sessional course in one specific UK University. The aim was to help students with their academic language tests and applications to UK universities (Algerian-UK university (X) contract, 2015). However, the programme design seemed to pay little attention to intercultural development and the need to adapt to the new cultural environment to live a successful study abroad experience. This was obvious as the programme content contained no cultural elements, and the way students were grouped in non-culturally diversified classes of only Algerians. The course design and content reflect that the programme designers aimed at keeping students within their cultural comfort zone.

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that there is currently a very limited understanding of the intercultural immersion outcomes on intercultural identity, particularly of Algerian students. Hence, it is important for Algerian governmental and educational institutions to know whether the study abroad programme (pre-sessional course more precisely) is delivering what they are promised or what is expected. The understanding of the intercultural experience, and the factors that contribute to intercultural identity development or hinder its progress will help improve programmes to offer a positive experience for university students and stake holders. This dissertation addresses this research gap by exploring Algerian students' intercultural identity transformation in

terms of perceptions, beliefs, and meaning making, and the factors that influence intercultural growth and transformation during the sojourning experience in the UK.

The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education provides a short guidance programme (three days) where students take part in workshops as part of the pre-departure orientation programme before their enrolment in the pre-sessional programme in the UK (Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). However, the workshops revolve only around academic information without introducing students to aspects of the host sociocultural environment. This programme is hence regarded as insufficient for preparing students to the challenging process of relocation. In this vein, many educationalists expressed that students need continuous counselling and guidance to overcome difficulties caused by unfamiliarity and diversity. Ali and Graham (2000) assert that intercultural preparation and guidance should be performed as a continuous process rather than as a one-time injection of knowledge. Guidance can cover a range of individual and collective activities related to information-giving, counselling, support, and intercultural teachings (Council of the European Union, 2008). Though examining the key factors influencing students' intercultural experience and transformation, this research can provide insightful information that would help in facilitating the students' study abroad experience. Insights can help institutions to construct new initiatives, or improve upon the existing one, in order to ensure that students are fully and adequately primed to benefit from the study abroad experience.

The present research seeks to explore an underrepresented population in research about interculturality and study abroad programmes (Maundeni, 2001). Whereas there is a predominance of studies dealing with American, Australian, Chinese, or European populations through quantitative methods (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Ward and Searle, 1991; Brice, 2002; Constantine et al., 2004; Berry, 2006a; Hendry et al., 2007), no qualitative thematic analysis based on an ethnographic study has focused on Algerian students' intercultural identity. The findings of this research

make significant contributions to the understanding of the process of intercultural adjustment, and the role of intercultural immersion and knowledge in shaping intercultural identity.

The present study is built upon a theoretical framework which has the potential to yield new insights and theoretical consideration for further research. Even though policy makers, intercultural relations and international education scholars, and education administrators seem to strongly agree that studying abroad entails positive outcomes for most – if not all- students, the lack of rigorously conducted research to prove this claim suggest that this belief is held to be a '*rational myth*' of higher education institutions and researchers (Pascarella, 2006, p.513).

This study is based on a theoretical framework comprising the three theories: 1. the communicative theory of identity (Hecht et al., 2003) is used to account for the role of intercultural communication on adaptability and cultural identity 2. The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is used to investigate the influence of self and other perception on identity development/sustainability/derivation, and account for students' behaviours across group boundaries 3. The communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001) is employed to explore the role of acculturation in adaptability and intercultural identity development. Intercultural identity development is too broad to investigate through one theory or perspective. On that account, the convergence of these theories will allow the exploration of different internal and external factors that may influence the process of intercultural identity development and the possible tensions and challenges brought by intercultural exposure. Results can add up or challenge the existing theories. Identity in this research is viewed as socially constructed through exchange and interaction, and flexible and changing over times and contexts.

This brief overview of the scope and rational of the research indicates the need for further research into the effects of study abroad programme on intercultural identity. Providing insights on the intercultural experience of Algerian students studying in the UK is necessary for establishing an

appropriate programme design that aligns with the students' needs. Results can also be significant for the establishment and evaluation of a support system that would assist in culturally preparing students prior their experience and guide them during their sojourning process.

1.3. Research purpose and questions

Scholars have noted that the study abroad experience of international students can be interculturally transformative as sojourners undergo a personal growth and cultural development, even if it is accompanied with sociocultural and psychological challenges (Anderson, 1994; Furnham, 2004). Whether Algerian students can experience a transformative intercultural identity development during their study abroad is the core interest of this research.

This study aims at exploring the change and development of students' intercultural identity through their experience of diversity and accumulation of intercultural knowledge. In doing so, the study focuses on the social experiences of students, intercultural contact, self and other perceptions, beliefs, and the way they make sense of their experiences. The study is designed to depict the process through which students go through to adjust to the new environment and the different factors that played a role in assisting students to develop interculturally and the ones which hindered their development.

My project was designed as an ethnographically informed case study. It has considered participants' lived experiences in the new British sociocultural context and their perspectives on their experiences. Collecting the data all along the study abroad experience aimed at the documentation of the students' change of beliefs, perceptions, and behaviours, and the ways in which their original cultural identity was influenced by their intercultural sojourning experience. The research endeavoured to achieve an understanding of what beliefs are relinquished, what new perspectives and values are acquired, what were the main intercultural information resources for students, what coping strategies

were used, and whether intercultural learning through exposure created a positive intercultural transformation. The data also provide insights into ways to help students to have a successful intercultural experience. To achieve these aims, the present study revolves around three research questions:

RQ1: What are the key factors influencing the intercultural identity development of students during study the abroad programme?

RQ2: What behaviours and perceptions are associated with the development of intercultural identity during the study abroad programme?

RQ3: How can we facilitate the development of intercultural identity through similar study abroad programmes in the future?

1.4. Organization of the Dissertation

Review of Literature: In Chapter 2, I contextualize the present study by providing a discussion that draws upon a wide range of literature within the scope of education, international education, intercultural relations, social psychology, cross-cultural relations, intercultural communication and contact, social sciences, and study abroad. The chapter presents a critical review of literature about intercultural identity development in relation to immersion granted by study abroad programmes (SAP). It goes through the outcomes related to study abroad highlighted in previous research and the impact of intercultural preparedness on students' intercultural adaptability. It also reviews the challenges related to the process of relocation.

Theoretical Framework: The theoretical framework upon which this research is based is presented in chapter 3. The theoretical framework is grounded in the philosophical orientation of the constructivist paradigm (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993) which is based on the premise that multiple realities constructed from multiple perceptions. The

theoretical framework converges the communicative theory of identity (CTI), the social identity theory (SIT), and the communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (CTCCA). The chapter goes through all the theories and explains the logic lying behind the use of each one of them and their role in structuring the research in a way that enables the answering of its questions.

Research Methodology: A comprehensive overview and discussion of the methodology and its applications in this exploratory study is presented in chapter. The epistemological considerations and the approach adopted for this research is presented. A rationale is provided for the use of ethnographic research strategy, case study design, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. A detailed description is provided for the sampling method and the participants' background and recruitment criteria. The chapter further presents the ways in which the present study meets the evaluative criteria of the qualitative research, and addresses issues concerning the researcher's reflexivity and positioning as well as the ethical considerations.

Data Analysis: In Chapter 5 the research findings are analysed. The chapter revolves around the research data analysis following the themes arising from a close scrutiny of the data in relation to the research questions. In this chapter, the focus was put on students' experiences, intercultural contact, perceptions' change, and behaviours across group boundaries, intercultural learning environments, intercultural transformation, and different challenges faced during the study abroad experience. The chapter is organised into 4 theme-based sections and a diagram is presented to point out the question-theme relation.

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusion: Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter, where I provided an evaluative and summative description of the study. In the final chapter I discuss to what extent the findings support or challenge the existing theories and literature of intercultural development through study abroad programmes. The chapter further tackles to what extent I was able to answer the research questions. Based on the finding of

the present research, theoretical contributions are made in the existing literature, and implications for policy are offered in the hope of informing national and international educationalists and stake holders. The chapter ends with the present study limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction to Chapter 2

Chapter 1 introduced the current research topic and presented the background of this study. It stated that the current study explores the role that study abroad programmes can have in facilitating the development of an intercultural identity. The present research looks at the sojourners' intercultural experiences, how they perceive these experiences, and how intercultural knowledge facilitates the process of adaptation to a different sociocultural environment. The present chapter, therefore, seeks to explore the current thinking in the field study abroad programmes, experiential learning, and the sociocultural development of intercultural identity. I will also review the relevant literature of the social construction of intercultural knowledge and the role on intercultural preparedness in facilitating the process of intercultural adaptation.

In examining these research areas, my purpose will be to provide a conceptual framework of inquiry for the present research. The design and implementation of the undertaken research is based on the concept of intercultural identity, and involves contributions from social constructionism, the communicative theory of identity (CTI), the social identity theory (SIT), and the communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (CTCCA).

This chapter draws upon a wide range of literature in education, international education, intercultural relations, social psychology, cross-cultural psychology, human communication, anthropology, social sciences, and study abroad were used. Publications in these fields were considered due to their capacity to provide different accounts and examples about the role of intercultural immersion in shaping the cultural identity. In the light of the fact that the milestones of this research including: intercultural identity, intercultural encounters, intercultural immersion, and study abroad programmes were identified in an array of disciplines including psychology, sociology, international education, or intercultural relations, this thesis takes a multidisciplinary approach.

The chapter starts by reviewing the literature related to study abroad programmes and the benefits associated with them. I critically review literature about intercultural identity development and how it relates to the immersion experience granted through studying abroad. I go on to reflect upon interculturality and the process of acquiring intercultural knowledge through intercultural encounters, interactions, and active engagement in the sociocultural milieu. I, then, review the traits on intercultural transformation highlighted in the literature. I will also explore the role of intercultural preparedness in facilitating the students' cross-cultural adaptability process. I then go through the literature dealing with the challenges that sojourners go through during intercultural immersion experiences such as the culture shock and the acculturative stress. I conclude the chapter by a summary of the main points tackled in it.

2.2. Study Abroad Programmes

It has been argued by several authors (e.g., Cushner & Mahon, 2002) that cultural efficiency (global competency, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity) cannot be systematically and academically taught, it is rather developed through exposure to diverse cultural settings. That is, in addition to the intercultural knowledge, sojourners need to be immersed in a culturally diverse context to better grasp the cultural norms and values and act accordingly. In this vein, Munoz, Wood, and Cherrier (2006) contend that intercultural proficiency learning within a classroom setting is challenging as students need to take part in concrete experiences in socioculturally different settings in order to prepare themselves to be interculturally effective and function adequately in today's complex, multicultural, and globalised world. The extension of the classroom beyond the conventional academic setting to include actual intercultural encounters with culturally diverse individuals and contexts has been recognized as beneficial in the process of intercultural transformation. Within this stream of thought, Kim (2001) asserts that intercultural development is achieved through experiences of cultural immersion which take place as people are relocated to a culturally different setting, such as the case of students enrolled in a study abroad programme.

Study abroad programmes expose students to people from different cultural, religious, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In doing so, students are granted a very intensive intercultural exposure opportunity where they have to adjust to novel social and cultural norms, expectations, and adapt their comportment to the new environment to be able to fit into the new setting (Hayes, 1998; Taylor, 2005). Study abroad programmes provide students with the opportunity of intercultural engagement through experiencing international encounters, leading them to better understand the cultural context (Schuster, 1998). The beneficial outcomes related to SAP have led to a significant rise in a number of students enrolled in courses outside their geographical boundaries (Hoffa, 2007; Hoffa & DePaul, 2010). The International Consultant for Education and Fairs (ICEF) reported that the global population of internationally mobile students went from 2.1 million in 2000 to 4.5 million in 2014. Also, the Institute for International Education reported that in the past two decades the number of students studying abroad has tripled and the countries to which students travel are increasingly diverse (2014:4).

Study abroad programmes (SAP) can be defined as any educational programme that takes place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin (Kitsantas, 2004). Similarly, Kelo, Teichler, & Yachter assert that they are programmes where '*students who cross national borders for the purpose or in the context of their studies*' (2006:5). SAP are becoming a tool to prepare students with the skills and assets that would help them to cope with today's ever-changing globalised world. The study abroad experience engages students in an unfamiliar sociocultural environment where they face stress and discomfort engendered by differences. Such experience may motivate them to engage in intercultural interactions and adjust their identity to cope with the new sociocultural norms (Kim, 2001).

There is a rich body of literature related to the influence of intercultural immersion offered by SAP. Some studies tackled areas of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development of students enrolled in a course abroad (Gillespie et al., 2009). Other research focused on the development influenced by the physical location of the individual (e.g. Dolby & Rahman, 2008).

Identity related inquiries looked at the identity's continuous transformation and development in the context of mobility. For example, Rizvi (2005) conducted a study to explore the ways in which students' identities and cultural affiliations are transformed by their experience abroad. Interviews and narratives showed that students developed a particular way of looking at their identity that is defined both in terms of their cultural traditions and experience of mobility abroad. Researchers report a wide range of benefits associated with being exposed and in contact with a diverse cultural setting amongst; the development of interculturally competent individuals who display a tolerant and non-judgmental perspective (Cleveland, Mangone, and Adams (as cited in Dignes, 1983). Hence, study abroad programmes are claimed to be a ground of rich intercultural exposure which challenges the students' thoughts, perspectives, and garner their worldview (Tritz & Martin, 1997).

Research about the outcomes of study abroad programmes investigated the intercultural experiences of similar cultural groups over time. For example, Johnston and Hanamitsu (2015) conducted a comparative study of global perceptions and exposure between students from China, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and the USA. Their study identified the impact of exposure to global information on students' global perceptions within different cultural contexts. The results demonstrated that the types of exposure vary by country. Their research findings also demonstrated that the type and outcomes of exposure are affected by both accessibility to international experiences and the motivation to avail oneself to other cultural experiences.

Another study carried out by Crowne (2013) explored the influence of cultural exposure on emotional and cultural intelligence. The study sample included 485 participants from an American university among which 89.9 % of the students were Americans. The results revealed that cultural exposure did not influence students' emotional intelligence. However, cultural exposure in various forms did significantly affect participants' cultural intelligence.

Several other studies took participants mainly from European, American, Japanese, and Chinese backgrounds. For example, aiming at exploring students' perspectives of intercultural contact, Dunne (2009) took 24 Irish students for his study. Maharaja (2018) study of the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural competence and personal development had a sample of 150 American student who took part in a study abroad programme. A study conducted by Koyanagi (2018) tried to investigate the influence of intercultural communication during short-term study abroad on Japanese students. Tian and Lowe (2013) analysed the role of cultural differences in feedback communication with the UK's intercultural and internationalized student body. Their longitudinal multiple-case research aim was to provide a rich body of data to contribute to an in-depth understanding of Chinese students' experiences in a UK university.

The extensive review of the impact of study abroad programmes on students' intercultural identity and competencies revealed that no study has sampled Algerian students and explored their intercultural experience outside their country of origin. Through taking Algeria students as a sample, this research can add insightful knowledge to the field of study as it explores the intercultural experience of a culturally different group of participants which have not been studied before. This thesis aims to explore the role of intercultural immersion in facilitating the development of intercultural identity. In doing so, and on the basis of the findings, recommendations can be made to enhance intercultural preparedness and help students develop interculturality.

It is worth mentioning that stakeholders, educators, and programme designers should aim at modelling the study abroad programmes to align with the students' needs. Engle and Engle (2003) stated that administrators and decision makers should '*re-orient their focus from an appraisal of the sheer numbers of students participating in international education to the quality of their experiences abroad*' (p.1). To be able to measure the quality of the intercultural immersion experience, Engle and Engle (2003) propose a system for categorizing the models of the SAPs on the basis of the level of immersion in the host cultural milieu. Their study aimed at building up a categorization scheme that would help students and programme administrators to match the needs of the participants with the adequate programme design in order to maximise the positive outcome of the sojourning experience.

The above literature is relevant to this study because the study aims to investigate the type of experience that Algerian students abroad are exposed to, and how their experience influence their identity, adaptability, and perceptions. The question of how the SAP will affect Algerian students' intercultural transformation and identity development is to be rigorously investigated so that the programme structure and design will have a solid evidence basis.

2.3. Benefits of Study Abroad Programmes

The popularity of study abroad programmes has grown significantly during the past decade. Such programmes are cited as a driving force lying behind the remarkable growth in the overall study abroad participation (Loveland & Murphy, 2006). A review of international education literature reveals that study abroad programmes have become an important part of higher education systems around the world (Cornwell & Stoddard, 1999; Altbach, 2002) for the beneficial outcomes they generate and their role in developing interculturally competent students. Studying abroad is an activity with an impact on students' success beyond college years (Kuh, 2008). This activity has been identified as affecting areas of academic achievement, attainment of educational objectives, widening of human

knowledge, intellectual and practical skills, and post college performance (Gonyea et al., 2008).

Study abroad literature has suggested that living and studying abroad is associated with a wide range of benefits. Tritz and Martin (1997) suggest that exposure to a country different from one's own and interaction with people from different sociocultural backgrounds can have an impact on anyone studying abroad. In their research on the history of study abroad programmes, Hoffa and DePaul (2010) report that studying abroad provides students the opportunity to learn about their own identity, and understand the foreign culture deeply through immersion. This latter helps students develop intercultural knowledge about the host culture (Gammonley, Rotabi, & Gamble, 2007) that would help them develop their cognitive capabilities. These capabilities range from intercultural awareness (Anderson et al., 2006), to open mindedness (Cushner & Mahon, 2002), and tolerance of diversity (Cushner & Karim, 2004).

Bruening and Frick (2004) note that international and intercultural experiences not only help students understand other cultures, but also recognise the narrowness of their previous perceptions and understandings of other cultures and countries as well. Students become exposed to cultural and social difference and engage in intercultural contact, which paves the way to increasing their cultural empathy and openness to diversity (Cleveland, Mangone, & Adams (as cited in Dignes, 1983) and reduce their ethnocentrism. As a result of an intensive intercultural exposure, perspectives and assumptions are challenged and the world view of the sojourner is enriched.

Studying abroad is supposed to grant participants a chance to take part in verbal and nonverbal communicative practices through intercultural encounters. Connection and interaction with people from diverse background is associated with an increased sensitivity towards other cultures, and a deeper sense of identity and self-awareness (Campbell, 2003). According to Kim (1998), intercultural encounters prompt individuals to adapt actively to their environments in order to avoid

disequilibrium. Research on a group of Chinese students in the United Kingdom concluded that after studying abroad, students adopted a positive and open attitude towards new and culturally diverse cultures and developed a motivation and willingness to be engaged in intercultural interactions and activities (Gill, 2007).

Study abroad programmes have the potential to improve student intercultural communication skills (Williams, 2005). However, William's study concludes that students must engage in meaningful and deep interactional experiences within the host culture to receive the complete gain on intercultural communication skills. Mere participation in SAPs is not sufficient for the development of all the previously mentioned gains. Participants must go deeper than just having a superficial experience of observing the world around them and taking academic assignments. Therefore, researchers call for in depth studies, with students pertaining to different cultural backgrounds, in different parts of the world to determine if students taking part in SAP demonstrate better communication skills (Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Williams, 2005).

Another study conducted by Zhai (2000) revealed no significant changes in the SAP participants' attitudes towards diversity such as openness and tolerance. Some researchers claim that there is unclear and limited evidence on the impact of SAP on attitude change (Hadis, 2005; Ismail, Morgan, & Hayes, 2006). Furthermore, research has taken both students who are culturally knowledgeable (e.g., students who travelled abroad before) and those who have never been culturally prepared together. Researchers (e.g., Straffon, 2003; Olson & Kreuger, 2001) suggest that research looking at the impact of SAP must extend new populations and settings to establish a greater certainty of the impact of SAP on students' attitudes.

Hence, this research comes as a response to the scientific need to take a bounded case study of only students who are culturally unprepared, who have not been taken as a case study for the investigation of intercultural identity development in an attempt to extend and diversify the studied

population. The present study takes as its focus a very rarely studied group - Algerian students - and explores their immersion experience in the UK. It aims at exploring the intercultural encounter experiences students engage in and its role in promoting their understanding about the host culture. It will look at the impact of the study abroad experience on students' intercultural adjustment and intercultural identity development.

2.4. Intercultural Identity

Identity has been, for a long time, a core interest of scientific inquiry in the field of education and intercultural studies. Researchers have tried to define the concept of identity while acknowledging that a clear-cut definition is hard to establish. The concept of identity is a private, complex, and unique issue (Martin & Nakayama, 2010) that should be thought of as a process rather than an established reality. Identity has been described as the 'framework of understanding one's self and the surrounding world' (Gudykunst 2005: 197). It is a flexible, constantly changing and constructed by the mix of different sub identities (ibid). The main core of this thesis is intercultural identity development. The present research view intercultural identity as the end on a continuum which starts with the cultural identity (Kim, 2001).

Cultural identity covers gender, ethnic, religious, national, regional, and racial identities associated with social and cultural groups (Gudykunst, 2005). In this research, cultural identity is seen as constructed through discourse and social practices (Burr, 1995). This implies that cultural identity is constantly being developed in the individual's mind working within a social framework. During such developmental process, the individual identifies himself based on social comparison producing culturally recognisable representations of the reality (Ivanic, 1998). Hence cultural identity is continuously open to change and development through the person's engagement in interchange and interaction processes within diverse sociocultural contexts.

When one is in a culturally different setting faced with ambiguity and unfamiliarity, the result may be either isolation and withdrawal from the intercultural contact and the unfamiliar context, or a growing motivation to overcome the stress and feeling of discomfort through developing adjustment and adaptation to the new context and hence developing a more complex sense of self (Kim, 2001). This new sense of self will detach the person from the original cultural ties and help him move beyond the cultural boundaries to develop an intercultural identity (Kim, 1991).

Kim (2001) asserts that identity exists as a continuum from cultural to intercultural, in which the cultural boundaries are extended, and new systems are explored. She further adds that a cultural identity links the individual to one cultural group, while an intercultural identity links the person with more than one cultural group as the individual will develop the ability to identify himself with out-groups through experiences of exchange and interactions (Kim, 2001, p. 2). During the development of an intercultural identity, individuals undergo stress and discomfort generated from exposure to unfamiliar cultural environments. This stress phase is strong at the initial period of the exposure and persists until the individual reaches intercultural adaptation (Kim, 2008). Such a process is not smooth and easy. Individuals go through a phase in which they experience the stress of adaptation, until they reach a stable state of intercultural adjustment (*ibid*). This process entails the construction of new cultural knowledge through exposure and interaction. The constructed intercultural knowledge may help in helping sojourners open up to 'otherness' and categorise with the other. The ability to encompass group cultural boundaries can denote the development of an intercultural identity.

However, it is worth noting that Kim's framework of development of intercultural identity through the process of adaptation is not free of criticism. Recent literature based on the communicative theory of adaptation, has pointed out that many factors that were not accounted for in Kim's theory can impede intercultural identity development making

people hostile, resentful, and disengaged (Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2012; Kinefuchi, 2010). Kim assumes that a cultural transformation is reached after attaining a 'functional fitness', 'acculturation', and 'psychological health' (Kim, 2008). However, some individuals can be 'maladaptive', unequally prepared to face the new cultural environment, having different levels of openness, strength, positivity, and resourcefulness, and have different cognitive, affective, and operational abilities to cope, which are all factors that can influence the adaptability process to reach intercultural transformation (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). This claim reflects that individual's background and predispositions may influence their ability to adapt to a cultural site.

The development of an intercultural identity is an ongoing process that can be attained through a hands-on experience in a culturally different setting. Studying abroad offers students the chance to be exposed to a different sociocultural environment and engage in intercultural contact. Such experiences are culturally rich and provide students with new perspectives, a wider worldview, and a reflective world outlook. The present research adopts the comprehensive definition of intercultural identity proposed by Kim (2001) and adopts her adaptability theory as part of its the theoretical framework. The findings of this study will later seek to add to this body of theory but will also to some extent challenge it.

2.5. Culture and intercultural learning through study abroad programmes

2.5.1. Culture

'Culture' is a term that is encountered a lot in the existing literature about study abroad programmes and intercultural identity development. In dealing with intercultural identity, we are faced with the challenging concept of culture. Many scholars tried to define it, while others have even asked to ban it in research (Bayart, 2005). A review of the concept lays the ground for various definitions put by a number of scholars in the field trying to satisfactorily define culture.

Geertz and Goodenough give two definitions of culture. Geertz emphasises its inherited nature stating that:

‘Culture is a historically transmitted semiotic network constructed by humans...which allows them to develop, communicate and perpetuate their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about the world’ (1973, p. 89)

As for Goodenough, he describes cultures in terms of a concept held in the mind of individuals:

‘A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a natural phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people’s behaviour or emotions. It is rather an organisation of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models of perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them’ (1977, p.36)

Culture could be a combination of both historically transmitted beliefs and ideas and the new developing ones. However, the definition given by Goodenough (1977) focusing on the fact that culture is the way in which people think, and how they perceive and reflect upon different facets of the existing culture can be considered as more relevant to the diversified and globalised nature of today’s world.

More recent literature goes to assert that the meaning of culture is related to power relations and composed of conflicting representations (Bhatia, 2007). Within the same stream of thought, Wikan (2002) claims that culture is not unchangeable and representative to all its members, but rather it is an object giving people the power to define the truth (p.86). Another aspect of culture that has been evoked is the fact that culture should not be defined as a specific number of characteristics and traits but rather in relation to interactions between people and groups (Abdallah-Preteille, 2003). Due to the criticism related to the conceptualisation of

the culture, some educationalists started proposing a new terminology that aligns with today's world of complexity and constant changes. Abdallah-Pretceille (2003) proposes the term of 'culturality' to refer to the vital aspects characterizing culture as dynamic, constructed, adaptable, and plural. Wikan (2002) suggests the 'knowledge/experience' to denote the vital aspects of culture as a sociocultural experiential construct, while Eriksen (2001) proposes that denoting culture should be done through denoting the 'local arts' meaning everything surrounding language, ideology, habits and ritual practices.

Nowadays, globalization makes it difficult to characterise or define cultures definitively. This difficulty may be rooted in that culture is an individual, psychological, and social construct (Matsumoto 1996: 18). That is, culture exists in each and every one of us individually with degrees of variation from one person to another, and culture also exists as a global, social construct. Since people are living in an era of change and development, an anthropological account of the culture of any society is only a type of a snapshot view of culture at that one particular time. This research considers culture as dynamic and its understanding requires a dynamic process of social engagement in an attempt to construct a shared meaning (Roberts et al., 2001). This cultural understanding is possible through exposure and interactions that students can experience during their study abroad experience.

2.5.2. Intercultural Learning through Study Abroad Programmes

During their intercultural sojourning experience, students can be shaped by the environment in which they are immersed through processes of socialisation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). As we are social beings by nature, it is through interaction with others that we develop our views, perspectives, and understanding. The processes of socialisation are the foundations of the intercultural learning, which takes place as the person tries to understand the perceptions, behaviours, and the value system of another culture and apply this understanding to their own culture orientation system and their way of thinking and acting in the new host environment (Thomas, 1988).

It seems plausible that cultural exposure through study abroad experiences provides participants with good opportunities of active engagement and exchange within the new unfamiliar context. The intercultural experience tends to challenge one's assumptions and thinking (Early & Peterson, 2004). Through observing and interacting in the new cultural environment, the individual's thinking and behaviour are influenced by the new cultural and social norms and values. In this vein, Bennett (1993) and Paige (1993) state that the process of cultural learning through active social engagement and intercultural communication helps participants move beyond having an ethnocentric worldview to being able to understand and acknowledge the existence of a variety of cultural systems and even integrate other perspectives into their own.

Intercultural learning does not aim at preserving the original cultural identity and protecting it from any kind of divergence. It is rather about overcoming the cultural barriers and being open towards others and tolerating their differences and accepting their cultures (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997). This idea is very relevant to the present study as it aligns with the research perception of intercultural identity development. The present research sees intercultural identity as a continuum from the cultural

to the intercultural phase where the individual embraces the differences, tolerates, and accepts them, and develops the ability to avoid the 'othering' and identify with more than one cultural group.

Taking part in a study abroad programme grants students a ground for intercultural knowledge construction through an active interaction, observation, and socialisation process. Intercultural exposure, therefore, leads the sojourner to reflect upon the experience and the group relationships to act later according to the insights brought by his/her exposure experience (Kolb, 1984). Study abroad opportunities (Norris & Gillespie, 2009) are perhaps the most recognised sociocultural exposure venues for students to develop intercultural (Williams, 2005a), as they grant them the chance to be exposed to the real cultural and social environment of the target culture (Sodnomdarjaa, 2006). For the students' case investigated in this thesis, taking part in a 6 months study abroad programme in the UK allows them to actively take part in the academic, social, and cultural life of the host environment.

Studying abroad is an opportunity for experiential learning. During the early days of the intercultural experience, students tend to compare familiar with unfamiliar culture practices creating a comparison platform where the participant's original culture is the norm (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). However, it is through this intercultural exposure opportunity that participants are granted the opportunity to develop a functional and active relationship with the host milieu through active engagement with the society and its members. This engagement helps students in accessing different social and cultural information and construct an intercultural knowledge making them more culturally aware and sensitive with flexible and non-judgmental perspectives (Gacel-Avila, 2005).

However, the literature also demonstrates that exposure to a foreign culture during the study abroad experience may have negative effects (Wang, 2009). Studies reveal that several factors, such as age, gender, target language proficiency, and previous cultural exposure, can play a

pivotal role in influencing the intercultural study abroad experience, and the exposure which does not take into consideration the learner sojourner factor might end in failure (Stafford et al., 1980). That is, research should account for the learner's willingness to be culturally engaged, personality, motivation, and psychological state. Moreover, being exposed to ideas that are different from those imbedded in our own meaning system can result in conflicting values, social judgment, and disrupt the adaptation and social functioning (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001). Hence, research has found that intercultural immersion through studying abroad can have both positive and negative outcomes.

Culture can shape our sense of self and our social relations, and influence our cognition, emotions, and actions (Kitayama & Markus, 2000). This study will investigate the influence that intercultural exposure has on students' perceptions, attitudes, and adaptation process. It will look at whether an intercultural preparedness and orientation are needed to guide students towards an active engagement in the new sociocultural life and successful adaptation. It will see if intercultural exposure and engagement through studying abroad may attune participants to diverse viewpoints allowing them to encompass cultural boundaries and unshackle their heads from ethnocentrism.

2.6. Intercultural Preparedness

Intercultural preparedness entails preparing students to adapt to a specific environment through providing practical information and advice about the host culture. The resources provided to students prior to their cultural and geographical relocation aim to encourage them to go beyond national and cultural diversities and 'enjoy their own and others' multiplicity as individuals' (IEREST, 2015:8). The individual's intercultural preparedness refers to his willingness and ability to alter or adapt their behaviour based on the sociocultural context (Dalton, Ernst, Deal, & Leslie, 2002).

Intercultural preparedness is becoming very important due to the globalization of communication and mass migration which transformed interactions and relations among people, nations, and cultures (Gannon, 2004). Thus, people experiencing relocation and interacting across cultural, social, and geographical boundaries should be prepared for exposure to cultural diversities given the possibilities of cultural misunderstandings or ineffective social engagement and interaction (Tuleja, 2005). In the case of students, their study abroad experience will be full of novel cultural experiences and unforeseen sociocultural differences. Hence, the preparedness to effectively function in a diverse cultural setting and accommodate to the host cultural environment is crucial for students dealing with international educational involvement (Martin & Nakayama, 2007).

Brinkmann and Weerdenburg (2003) assert that there are some prerequisites required for an effective cross-cultural exposure experience. These required elements revolve around the appropriate knowledge about the culture where the individual is to be relocated to (cognitive competence), as well as the ability to behave appropriately and effectively through matching the expected outcomes of cross-cultural exchange with appropriate communication. These prerequisites can foster the level of the individual intercultural preparedness to the new environment through enhancing his/her self-efficacy before the actual exposure. In order to be culturally prepared for exposure to an alien cultural environment, traits of tolerance and open-mindedness (Chang, 2011; Killick, 2017; Gu, 2016), assertiveness (McLachlan & Justice, 2009), sensitivity (Sutton & Rubin, 2010), flexibility and empathy (Dodd, 1987) play key role in effective cultural functioning. That is, these traits can help the sojourner be less biased and judgmental and enable him/her to communicate meaningfully with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) also suggest that there are some predictors for intercultural effectiveness. They claim that in order to be culturally prepared and effective in other cultures, sojourners need to be sensitive enough to notice differences, be aware of diversities, and willing to adjust their behaviour to meet the new culture's cultural norms and expectancies.

Intercultural preparedness might significantly enhance the sojourners' adaptation process in the host culture (Puck et al. 2008; Harris, 2004). In this vein, Cuhlova and Yar (2018) conducted a research investigating the importance of the intercultural training as part of the expatriation process. In their study they aimed to detect the flaws within the current trainings so as to maximise the sojourners' adaptation once relocated to a different environment. Data was collected via a questionnaire completed by 164 Czech expatriates. The researchers' results display that when expatriates took part in the cross-cultural training, they felt better adjusted to the host culture's living conditions, and more open to the cultural norms and rules of conduct and engaged in everyday communication with locals.

Intercultural training is considered to be an effective way to foster people's ability to cross geographical and cultural boundaries with the cultural knowledge needed for building a functional relationship with the host environment (Lenartowicz et al. 2014). The type of the training would depend on the work, environment, individuals, and cultural factors (Brewster & Pickard. 1994). Within this stream of thought, Bennett et al. (2000) suggest that intercultural training is based on the purpose of exposure, the goals, and the needs of the participants. In the case of students taking part in a study abroad programme, factors such as the degree of interaction with the host community and culture depending on the cultural differences between the home and the host culture should be taken into consideration to design the most effective training (Mendenhall et al., 1995).

The literature that I have reviewed above reveals the importance of intercultural preparedness training in improving one's understanding of other's culture, behaviours, expectancies, and way of living. An understanding which will later help participants adjust their behaviours and change their perceptions to align with the expectancies of the host environment. However, some scholars (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) assert that intercultural preparedness training programmes should not be

limited to pre-departure but include the period of the exposure to the new culture.

It is worth pointing to the fact that research highlighted that the sojourner's intercultural knowledge per se is not sufficient for effective intercultural functioning. In this vein, Brinkmann & Weerdenburg (2014) posit that the sojourner may encounter situations that contradict with his/her expectancies based solely on the accumulated knowledge of the host culture. Furthermore, Beaven & Golubeva (2016) argue that since identities are constructed within social and discursive practices and changing according to the context and the purpose of the interaction, it can be said that certain identifications can feel more relevant than others in particular contexts. However, knowledge can help in altering perceptions and adjusting behaviours in accordance with the host culture's demands.

Intercultural readiness helps students develop a better understanding of different types of identities, the influence of diversities on the communication process, and become aware of the ways in which people negotiate, develop, or construct their identities depending on the context, experiences, and encounters (Beaven & Golubeva, 2016). At the same time intercultural knowledge can be relevant in some situations and not others. Therefore, literature reviewed in this section reveals that there are two assumptions. On one hand, there is the assumption that pre-departure training is enough per se for helping students adapt to the host culture later, and on the other hand, that knowledge should be followed by in-experience orientation as exposure can entail different outcomes than the ones expected. Therefore, as stated in chapter 1, the present research attempts to add further insights to the literature and set further recommendations that can improve students' preparedness through investigating whether students' personally accumulated intercultural knowledge is sufficient in ensuring effective cultural functioning and intercultural identity development. Data collection will aim at observing the students' immersion experience and the type of guidance that can be provided from the programme supervisors to help them facilitate their

intercultural identity development, and eventually adapt the new community, and ensure psychological comfort.

2.7. Being Intercultural: Intercultural Transformations through Exposure

We are living in a world of constant change and rich diversity where the intercultural experience can be both liberating and threatening (Alred, 2003). The intercultural experience entails entering an unfamiliar context where the customary ways of responding to incidents and circumstances are highly challenged and might change the individual in important ways (ibid). In the process of adapting to new environments and cultures, the cultural outsider (i.e., the individual who holds different sociocultural background, language, and beliefs) is required to have some knowledge of the culture he/she is immersed in (Paige, 1993). Full immersion in the target culture and the cultural differences constantly challenge the behaviours, expectations, and the preconceptions that sojourners may have on the host culture (Grove & Torbiorn, 1993). This research departs from the idea that this knowledge required to understand the culture and to function in accordance to its demands is constructed through social practices. Intercultural knowledge can help in developing an intercultural identity through challenging some taken for granted conceptions, changing attitudes Vis a Vis cultural diversity, and leading to encompass group favouritism and categorise with culturally diverse groups.

The term ‘intercultural’ is commonly used in expressions referring to different types of subjectivity such as intercultural experience, intercultural identity, intercultural communication, intercultural competence, and intercultural learning (Byram, 1997; Kim, 2012). Being intercultural revolves around the ability to reflect on the relationship among groups and the experience of those relationships (Alred, Byram, and Fleming, 2003). It is both the awareness of experiencing otherness and the capability of reflecting upon the experiences. Being intercultural includes the ability to refrain from imposing our values, views, and categories on others and try to construct their frame of reference and see

things from their perspective (Bredella, cited in in Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003). Researchers claim that students report that they have been ‘transformed’ through their intercultural immersion study abroad programme (Hammer in Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012). One of the core interests of this research is the extension of interculturality to the experience of other cultural groups’ culture, conventions, and way of life.

Experiencing interculturality could take different forms, but in this research, I am focusing on the processes taking place as the students step outside their bounded cultural comfort zone and experience the new culture’s conventions and values by which people live in the new context. In this research the concept of interculturality revolves around the experience of other groups’ conventions, value system, social norms and behaviours.

2.7.1. Outcomes of Study Abroad Experiences

Study abroad programmes’ literature implies that students who study abroad develop intellectually and personally as a result of their immersion. Research about the outcomes of studying abroad assert that studying abroad affects the students’ intellectual development, international perspectives, and personal development (Kauffman, 2012). Outcomes of intercultural exposure were described in terms which were classified as affective, behavioural or cognitive (Bateman, 2004). Affective outcomes are related to mood and attitudes, behavioural outcomes to observable behaviours and cognitive outcomes relate to thoughts, perceptions, knowledge and thinking processes (Krathwohl et al., 1973). In this research, I view that intercultural identity development is reflected in these outcomes developed through active engagement in the host culture. The following table reviews some of the literature which explored the cognitive, behavioural, and effective outcomes of intercultural immersion experiences.

A range of outcomes resulting from intercultural encounters experiences through intercultural immersion were identified in the literature and are summarised in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The tables show generalised outcomes of intercultural encounters through study abroad experiences and are classified as affective, behavioural, and cognitive outcomes.

Effective Outcomes	References
Appreciation of other cultures; expanded world view; global mindedness, tolerance	Festervand & Tillery (2001); DeLoach, Saliba, Smith, & Tiemann (2003); Bodycott (2015); Brown and Graham (2009); Chang (2011); Gu (2016); Killick (2017)
Confidence and assertiveness	Andrade, (2006);Chang (2011); Clapp-Smith and Wemsing (2014); Gu (2016); Killick (2017); McLachlan and Justice (2009);
Sensitivity to cultural context, self-knowledge, appreciation for cultural differences, and practical travel skills	Sutton & Rubin (2010)
Sadness, frustration, confusion, anxiety, stress.	Abusalem (2004); Bochner (2003); Chang (2011); W. Gu (2016).

Table 2. Affective outcomes of intercultural immersion

Table 2 displays affective outcomes resulting from intercultural encounters and includes a range of positive and negative emotions experienced by international students. Affective outcomes include positive emotions where students are happy about their experience abroad regarding their verbal engagement with others and their active engagement within the new sociocultural milieu. The table also includes some negative sides of the cultural immersion and the feelings students

assert such as embarrassment, sadness, frustration and homesickness.

Behavioural outcomes	References
Adjustment and adaptability	Killick (2017); Kumi-Yeboah and James (2014); Okamura (2009); Rich (2011)
Intercultural competency and communication skills	Anderson, Lawton, Hubbard, & Rexeisen (2006) ; Chieffo & Griffiths (2004); Kehl & Morris (2007-2008); Chang (2011)
Academic and group working skills	Andrade, (2006); Burkhardt (2013)
Independence and self-management skills	Gu (2016); McLachlan and Justice (2009)

Table.3. Behavioural outcomes of intercultural immersion

Table 3 demonstrates that the intercultural experience of study abroad can result in various behavioural outcomes. These generalised outcomes range from being outgoing and adapting to the change witnessed such as cultural practices and time management, to adjusting one's way of behaving to avoid offending anyone around and adopting local cultural and social practices. The range of skilled developed in the host country also include academic skills, such as communication and team work. Research shows that students are keener to be assertive, ask questions, and ask for assistance and resources when needed.

Cognitive outcomes	References
Increasing global awareness, intellectual and personal growth	Chieffo & Griffiths (2003); Gorka & Niesenbaum (2001); Jurgens & McAuliffe (2004); Lewis & Niesenbaum (2005).
Reflective skills	Bochner (2003); Mason and Lawrence (2014)
Self and other awareness and questioning one's taken for granted beliefs	Buchanan (2004); Chang (2011); Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014); Heppner et al. (2012)

Table 4. Cognitive outcomes of intercultural immersion

Cognitive outcomes of studying abroad are summarised in Table 4. These include thinking and reflective processes, the constructions of new views and angles of perception, and the developed understanding about the self and the other. As an outcome of the intercultural exposure, students learn about the new culture and people who are different from them through active engagement and encounters. This constructed intercultural knowledge helps students broaden their perspectives and develop an interest in learning about diversities. Literature also demonstrates that intercultural immersion through studying abroad pushes students to reflect upon themselves and their experience and in the process question their beliefs. Such reflection and thinking processes may lead to change in opinions and broader worldview.

2.8. Intercultural Encounters

In this research I will use the term *intercultural encounters* to refer to the situations in which students can interact with members of the host or other different culture. There is an abundance of research published on the impact that intercultural encounters have on intercultural competences (e.g., Xiao & Petraki, 2007). Literature reflects that there is a myriad of terms used to denote events and situations which could be described as intercultural encounters. Some studies have been using these terms interchangeably (Dorozhkin & Mazitova, 2008; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Lasonen, 2010; Liu, Chua, & Stahl, 2010; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Amongst these terms are intercultural contact, intercultural interaction, intercultural experience, intercultural encounter, and acculturation experience. The majority of intercultural encounters involve verbal (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2010; Cheney & Valentine, 2001; Hiller & Wozniak, 2009; Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015) and non-verbal interactions (Beamer, 1995) which do not necessarily involve other persons (e.g., encounter with the outside environment and social, cultural, and religious daily habits). Table 5 illustrates different features found in the body of literature which exemplify intercultural encounters.

Features	Examples
Non-verbal encounters (Does not necessarily involve other persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encounter with the surrounding environment (McLachlan & Justice, 2009) - Encounter with the host country cultural and religious practices (Kumi-Yeboah & James, 2014; Okamura, 2009) - Queuing for public transport (Montuori & Fahim, 2004)
Verbal encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social events involving face to face interaction with significant other (Bochner, 2004) from different sociocultural background (Byram, 1997; Holmes et al., 2015; Méndez Garcia, 2016)

Table 5. Verbal and non-verbal features of intercultural encounters

Intercultural encounters have also been associated with different social and cultural norms (Sieck, Smith, & Rasmussen, 2013), which differ from students' expectations as they are not familiar with different sociocultural practices. These practices can include (among others) for example; the confrontation with different dressing styles and alcohol consumption (Patron, 2006), and new ways of addressing teachers (Yue, 2010). Hence, a comprehensive definition of intercultural encounter would be that of Holmes et al (2015, p. 17) stating that:

'An interaction (verbal and non-verbal) between two or more people in situations (not necessarily countries) where they may perceive each other to have different backgrounds (cultural, linguistic, geographical, etc.) and where these differences are salient and affect the nature of the interaction (which might include empathy, same-ness and shared understanding, despite apparent surface differences).'

When dealing with intercultural encounters, it is inevitable to mention the language. As the host culture's language is English, which is considered as today's *Lingua Franca*, participants are required to communicate in English. The present research participants are top of their classes back in Algeria (the scholarship is granted on the basis of classification of students) and are preparing to be enrolled in a PhD programme in the UK. Since participants are English majored students, one can assume that they may encounter fewer difficulties expressing their thoughts and feelings in English than students who studied subjects other than English (International students for example). Data will later reveal whether students faced any linguistic difficulties, and whether their day to day interactive experiences helped in developing their interactional skills.

Much of the literature argues that intercultural encounters help in the overall intercultural development of sojourners. Meierkord (2000) asserts that intercultural encounters rise cooperation and collaboration rather than conflict as interlocutors wish to display to each other positive attitudes. Intercultural interactions are also associated with improved communicative competence (Nagy, 2008). Moreover, research implies that as a result of intercultural encounters, sojourners are likely to modify their previous stereotypes and alter their behaviour and adopt a positive attitude (*ibid*). However, studies also point to the importance of the setting in influencing the sojourners willingness to engage in a full intercultural immersion process. Students are more likely to engage in intercultural encounters when they are in a familiar context that makes them feel confident and safe, hence extrovert and engaging (Ying, 2002; Nagy, 2008).

The data collected in this research will help us understand the influence of the diversity of the cultural milieu and unfamiliarity of the context on students' willingness to engage in intercultural encounters. It will also point to the role of encounter experiences in the students' overall intercultural development.

2.8.1. Intercultural interactions

While intercultural encounters can involve interactions with the surrounding world such as encountering social, cultural, and religious habits (e.g. queuing, praying...Etc), intercultural interactions are centred on the ability of understanding cultural communication between individuals. Kim (1991) asserts that the individual's intercultural interaction originates from his '*capacity to suspend or modify some of the old cultural ways, to learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways, and to creatively find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural difference/unfamiliarity*' (p.268). In this research the word intercultural 'interaction' is used instead of 'communication' to denote the day to day communicative practices of students with people from diverse cultures and avoid an overlap with 'intercultural communication' as a field of study. This study aims to explore how can intercultural interactions help students develop their intercultural understanding and construct their intercultural knowledge.

Intercultural interaction denotes both verbal and non-verbal communication. On one hand, verbal communication focuses on the use of language as a means of communicating thoughts, views, affiliations, and feelings. Language proficiency and confidence in language use are essential in the process of effective intercultural verbal communication (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966). It is important to acknowledge that difficulties in intercultural verbal communication may arise due to differences in accents or dialects, expressions and forms of politeness, methods of conveying messages, and structure of the conversation (Argyle, 1982). On the other hand, non-verbal communication entails expressing emotions and feelings using symbols, facial expressions, crying, shouting, or posture (ibid).

Study abroad programmes represent a ground for intercultural contact as they offer an intercultural learning environment rich in cultural diversity. Researchers (e.g., Allen et al., 1999; Gurin et al. 2002) identified the educational and social benefits of the students' engagement in intercultural

interactions with peers who are socioculturally different from them. Studies highlighted that when students experience intercultural encounters and engage in interaction with the diverse other, they become more open to diversities through challenging their own taken for granted beliefs and assumptions (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

In the new multicultural environment such as university, dorms, or the outside social environment, students meet people from diverse cultural backgrounds. People from other cultures may differ from Algerian students in terms of gender, age, religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, cultural background, and language. Due to the diversities that study abroad programmes offer, many intercultural contact and communication scholars (Wright., et al, 1997; Chang., et al, 2003) investigated intercultural interactions among students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Researchers examined different communication processes embedded in the interaction among people pertaining to various cultural backgrounds. These investigations focus mainly on communication among and between people from different countries (Gudykunst, 1989; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Kim, 1995, 2001), and between individuals from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Hecht, 1998; Orbe, 1995, 1998a). This body of research uncovers and explains how different racial and ethnic groups engage and perceive communication from their own cultural mind-sets, knowledge, system, and values. In the following section, I will go through some of these studies tackling intercultural interactions.

The academic attention given to intercultural interaction experiences correlated with the universities' internationalization of their student bodies. Researchers investigated situations of diversity where the individual is expected to interact across many cultural boundaries on a daily basis. For example, intercultural communication scholar Mark Orbe (1995, 1996, 1998) explores the lived interactional experiences of minority group members in diverse cultural contexts. He addresses the power relations involved in intercultural communication processes in a qualitative way to uncover how minority group members perceive, negotiate, and experience their intercultural encounters. His research uncovers the

importance of understanding how people from diverse minority group members in an environment that is not theirs live and view intercultural communication in context of in-group and out-group relations.

Another study conducted by Volet and Ang (1998) revealed that intercultural groups display a great intercultural learning opportunity but are not capitalised upon as there is no sufficient social interaction between home and international students. Finding of Levin, Van Laar, and Sidanius (2003) report that contact between culturally diverse groups improves relations and reduced stress. On another thread of research exploring the possible barriers to effective intercultural interaction, Peacock and Harrison (2009) report that language difficulties, the fear of expectancies and behaving inappropriately made interactions wearing with intimidation and fear, leading to avoidance and withdrawal. Within the same line, Ippolito (2007) asserts that language barriers and cultural barriers are among the factors influencing intergroup work and interaction. Hence, literature suggests that despite the positive outcomes of intercultural interactions, they remain a source of stress and anxiety for students.

The present research investigates the process of intercultural interactions between Algerian students and their international counterparts, identifies the main barriers, and the impact interactions have on their intercultural development. In doing so, it will uncover whether intercultural interactions represent a factor effecting intercultural identity development. This thesis focuses qualitatively on the meaning of intercultural interaction for students and how it impacts their factual knowledge construction and cultural understanding. It explores how knowledge built through socialisation and exposure helps in the students' intercultural development and enable them to eventually categorise with more than one cultural group.

2.9. Traits of Intercultural Transformation

In the view of some authors (e.g. Alred et al, 2003) being intercultural revolves around the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which enable the person to effectively function outside his cultural comfort zone. As previously pointed out in this research chapter, literature shows a great amount of research exploring facets of an intercultural transformation and the skills developed by sojourners during their immersion experiences. However, because it is not feasible to deeply investigate each outcome of the students' intercultural exposure, this research focuses on some of the major effective, behavioural, and cognitive outcomes associated with intercultural exposure and constituting major components of intercultural identity development.

The present thesis focuses on intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and awareness as traits to explore in the analysis of the students' intercultural identity development. That is, this research joins the previous studies in characterizing an intercultural person as being: open to diversity (Kehl & Morris, 2008), culturally sensitive (Salisbury, 2011; Bloom et al., 2016), able to adapt to new unfamiliar environments (Kim, 2001), and culturally aware. The next section discusses these traits of interculturality one by one.

2.9.1. Intercultural Sensitivity

Knowledge about cultural diversities, understanding of others' cultures, the ability to have coping skills and communicative competency are becoming increasingly important to effectively function in a world of diversities (Lambert, 2004). Aligning with Lambert's stream of thought, scholars believe that the development of intercultural skills including intercultural sensitivity has become a significant goal for study abroad programmes (Mahoney & Schamber, 2004), and the level of intercultural development increases with the increasing degree of intercultural sensitivity (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

Relevant research has given a wide range of definitions to intercultural sensitivity (IS). Intercultural sensitivity describes an individual's response to cultural differences and perspectives of people from other cultures (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Straffon, 2003). For Hammer et al. (2003) intercultural sensitivity is the developmental process that reflects the degree of the person's cognitive ability to deal with cultural differences (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). They further add that it is ' *the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences.*' (2003, p.422). In their definition, Hammer et al. (2003) refer to an individual's ability to locate the diverse cultural traits through direct sociocultural experiences.

Chen and Starosta (1997) focus on defining intercultural sensitivity as '*an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote appropriate and effective behaviour in intercultural communication*' (p. 5). They emphasise the willingness and motivation to understand, appreciate and accept these differences with the intention of generating a positive outcome in an intercultural encounter. This willingness and motivation to alter the behaviour in order to display positive image and attitudes towards other cultures is also stressed by Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) who state that : '*to be effective in another culture people must be (...) willing to modify their behaviour as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures.*'(p. 416). Considering intercultural sensitivity from Chen's & Starosta's (1997) as well as Bhawuk's & Brislin's (1992) standpoint, intercultural sensitivity is considered to be a dynamic concept, that requires active participation of the individual in the intercultural interaction and socialisation process within the environment he is immersed in.

A rich body of literature investigated the impact of study abroad programmes on the development of intercultural sensitivity (Engle & Engle, 2004; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2002; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Rundstrom Williams, 2005; Shafteel, Shafteel, & Ahluwalia, 2007). Medina-López-Portillo (2004), Engle and Engle (2004),

and Paige, Cohen, and Shively (2004) have examined intercultural sensitivity in study abroad programs designed to improve language skills. Paige et al. (2004) found that US students studying language in French and Spanish speaking countries improved their overall intercultural sensitivity. Similar findings were reported by Engle and Engle (2004) who noticed that the longer the study programme is, the greater the development of intercultural sensitivity is. Maharaja (2018) study on the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural sensitivity and personal development reports that students acquire a better understanding of their own and the other's culture. The present study will explore how intercultural sensitivity can influence students' behaviours with others and their overall intercultural transformation.

Intercultural sensitivity is crucial to enable people to live and work with others from different cultural backgrounds (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006). Bennett (1993) proposed that two categories of responses to intercultural sensitivity could be observed as the individual transcends his cultural comfort zone: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. Ethnocentrism is composed of three distinct stages: denial, defence, and minimisation, as for ethnorelativism, it is composed of acceptance, adaptation, and integration. This is illustrated in figure 01 below that explains Bennett's model of the development of intercultural sensitivity followed by an explanation of the stages.

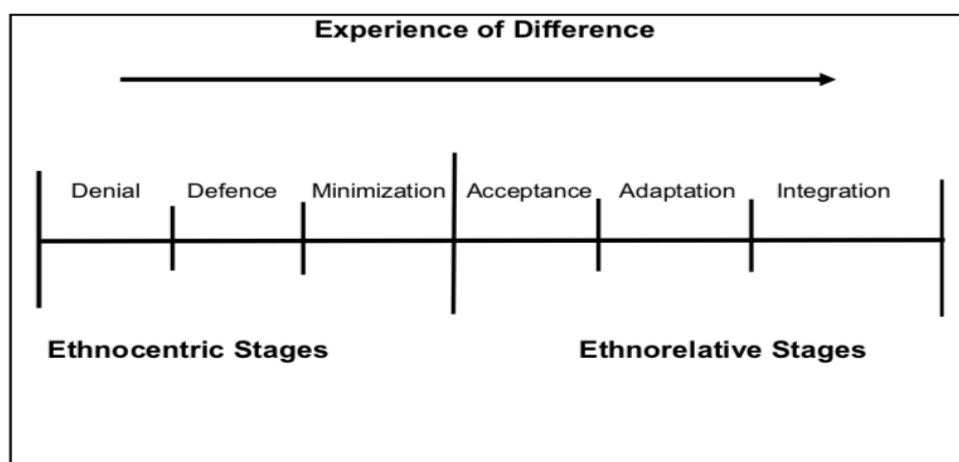


Figure 1: Bennett's (1993) Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view our way of doing things as the norm. The first encounter with differences (denial stage) is when differences seem invisible to the sojourner. Over an extended period of time abroad within a diverse cultural setting, one starts to be judgmental through putting any displayed difference in his/her own cultural frame. According to Bennett (1993), the defence stage entails the recognition of the existence of the cultural differences. The defensive strategies for dealing with cultural differences include denigration and feelings of superiority to the other culture or cultures encountered. After repeated exposure experiences, the sojourner moves to a position where he no longer denies differences but tries to accept their nature. This stage is called minimisation. It is the third ethnocentric stage, where the importance of cultural differences is recognised to exist but is lessened and subordinated to the values of the person.

With the passage of time in the host cultural environment, and with the development of the individual's intercultural knowledge, there is a shift from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Acceptance is the first of the three ethnorelative stages. In this stage, differences are accepted and respected, and the observer acknowledges that cultural norms and values are relative to the culture holding them. Adaptation, the second stage, involves adjusting one's behaviour and attitudes to the cultural environment he is in. The final stage of ethnorelativism is integration, where the observer tries to work on developing his or her relationship to any given culture. According to Bennett (1993), the longer people spend in contact with another culture, the more likely they will be to progress from one of the earlier ethnocentric perspectives, to one of the later, ethnorelative perspectives.

Students taken in this research are monocultural and are immersed for the first time in a different sociocultural setting. Data gathered throughout their experience in the host culture will reflect the process they experience to reach an ability to alter their behaviours and develop an ethnorelative perspective or withdraw and keep their initial ethnocentrism. Hence, this

research will explore whether intercultural immersion influences students to develop as interculturally competent individuals or whether it represents an identity threat for students and push them to reject diversities and assert their original identity.

2.9.2. Intercultural Awareness

Knowledge construction in global environments forms the basis of our world view, a view learned through socialisation and social interactions. This research is based on the premise that intercultural knowledge construction (intercultural awareness) through socialisation forms the basis of intercultural development. Intercultural awareness (IA) is a main pillar of intercultural knowledge accumulation. IA involves recognising cultural differences. Chen (2007) refers to intercultural awareness as the ability to understand the cultural conventions that affect the way in which people behave and think. Intercultural awareness denotes the ability to stand back from your own point of view and become aware not only of your original culture, beliefs, and value system, but also of the norms and values of the other culture.

Several researchers have tried to describe intercultural awareness. According to Robins et al. (2002), becoming interculturally aware involves tolerating differences, appreciating diversity, avoiding being judgmental and stereotypical, and building an intercultural knowledge which permits crossing the boundaries of differences and diversities. Intercultural awareness includes knowledge about the similarities and differences between diverse cultures (Hill, 2006). Awareness does not signify intercultural knowledge per se, but also positive attitudes towards other cultures such as respect, empathy, and curiosity (Heyward, 2002; Matveev & Nelson, 2004).

A detailed account of cultural awareness was presented by Byram (1997) as part of a framework of intercultural communicative competence. He emphasised the understanding of the nature of cultural norms as vital to reach an ability to evaluate practices and products in one's own and other

cultures and countries. What Byram (1997) and others emphasise in the notion of cultural awareness is the importance of developing the appropriate intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes and use them in understanding other cultures and in communicating across cultural boundaries and diversities. Intercultural awareness is, therefore, an ability to negotiate and mediate between different sociocultural frames based on an intercultural knowledge constructed through exposure and communication. However, these skills and knowledge can be constructed only through active engagement with the other cultural systems and frames.

Being intensively exposed to, and taking part in, the new cultural life helps participants to deal with different concepts from diverse cultural perspectives, and assists them in building their intercultural awareness (Williams, 2005). Students' intercultural awareness is based on perceiving cultures as dynamic and diverse. This intercultural perspective revolves around understanding the original culture and the understanding of the world and others who are different (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). Developing intercultural awareness is by no means a passive process. It is a process that goes beyond observing the world surrounding us to understanding, comparing, and reflecting upon it (Liddicoat and Scarino 2009). Sojourners should be engaged in their interactions, behaviours and cultures, and reflect upon them. These processes of comparisons and reflections indicate the start of building connections between the old and new sociocultural and linguistic knowledge (ibid) and are what encourages the development of the learner into an intercultural being.

Kiely (2009) also emphasises the fact that awareness goes beyond mere observation to actual understanding. She states that intercultural awareness can only be developed through learners' engagement with their intercultural accumulated knowledge through their exposure experience. Learners' comparisons and reflections establish their involvement with

external cultural knowledge signifying the development of intercultural awareness.

Noticing linguistic and cultural facts, in the context they occur, and sociocultural engagement establish the basis towards developing intercultural awareness. Hence, intercultural exposure represents a good opportunity for students to develop hand on experience knowledge. The present research participants are placed in a diverse sociocultural and linguistic environment and the success of their learning experience depends on their willingness to learn about other and accept diversities, and their active engagement in a give and take sociocultural process.

2.9.3. Intercultural Adaptation

Crossing cultural and geographical boundaries during the study abroad experience is considered a significant transition, which engenders a considerable amount of accompanying stress, involving confrontation and adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological experiences of change (Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Kim, 2001, Martin & Harrell, 1996). Going beyond the comfort zone of the individual entails attitudinal and emotional adjustment and challenges the very basis of who we are as cultural beings. Study abroad students are faced constantly with the numerous adjustment challenges so as to integrate into the sociocultural dynamics of the society and the culture they are being immersed in. Below, I go through the definitions of intercultural adaptation, and the body of research that dealt with the process of adapting to a new sociocultural environment.

Intercultural adaptation includes the sojourners' change of the way of feeling, behaving, and thinking (Yang, Noel, & Saumure, 2006). Intercultural adaptation is viewed as the ability to adapt to another culture with its requirements, values, and beliefs (Chang et al. 2013). The adaptation process can produce the feeling of the loss of the original identity for some, and stimulate personal development for others (Kim, 2001). That is, adaptation can be influenced by a number of individual and environmental factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, previous cultural

experiences, coping style, personality, and communication (Bennett, 1993). Individual and psychological factors may include aspects, such as expectations, adjustment, perception, and tolerance (Weaver, 1993). As for the environmental factors, they include the host culture, demographics, length off the stay, attitudes of the host culture towards foreigners, social and academic support (Kim, 2001). Kim asserts that each adaptive challenge the sojourner passes through represents an opportunity to transcend the perimeters of the original culture enabling him or her to challenge his or her taken for granted assumptions and raise his or her sense of self-awareness.

Kim (1989) claims that intercultural adaptation is a process that the sojourner goes through to increase his social fitness and develop a functional relation with the host cultural environment. Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) assume that there are two basic causes of intercultural adaptation: the reduction of uncertainty, and the reduction of anxiety. They claim that one cannot work without the other. It is the combination of both uncertainty and anxiety reduction, which would enable intercultural adaptation. Gudykunst and Hammer argue that sojourners are not only uncertain about how to behave or what behaviours to expect in the host culture, they also experience feelings of anxiety which is, to them, '*the fear of negative consequences in a 'foreign' cultural environment*' (p. 112). Uncertainty reduction is the cognitive element that refers to the individual's capacity of accounting for his behaviour and that of the others during intercultural interactions. Although perception of uncertainty and anxiety vary among participants, both are present to a certain degree, and are related directly to intercultural adaptation (ibid).

Relevant research literature (e.g. Yang et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2001) focuses on the experience of intercultural adaptation to account for the process sojourners go through to reach successful adaptation, and also the quality of their social engagement with members of the host cultural milieu. This social engagement is the focus of intercultural communication research tackling direct interaction between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication scholars approach intercultural

adaptation from two main standpoints. Some research focuses on problem solving (e.g. the culture shock), while other studies focus on positive outcomes and experiences. For example, on the one hand, Furnham and Bochner (1986) highlighted the positive outcomes of intercultural exposure as a result of their examination of the sojourners' personal development after the intercultural exposure experience. Furnham and Bochner reported that intercultural immersion makes the individual adaptable and flexible. Kim and Ruben (1988), on the other hand, integrated the two approaches (problem solving and personal development) to account for intercultural adaptation. Kim (2001) claims that intercultural experiences are complex and problematic, and thus provide opportunities for intercultural transformation. Her approach to intercultural adaptation will later be tackled in detail in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

In general, sojourning students find themselves confronted with unfamiliarity once outside their cultural comfort zone. For participants in this research, the learning experience necessitates adaptation in order to fit in the new site and meet its demands. This can be particularly stressful and can entail some intercultural difficulties as studying in the UK entails being immersed in a completely different sociocultural environment.

2.10. Difficulties Related to Intercultural Immersion

The increased contact between cultures in today's globalized world entails rapid development in the frequency of intercultural contact between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural contact is fuelled by the globalisation of industry, entertainment, education and leisure pursuits (Erez, 1994). Study abroad programmes are a good illustration of this growing intercultural contact trend. As students leave their cultural comfort zone, they are faced with unfamiliarity that may cause some difficulties while they try to adapt to the new cultural environment.

Research about sojourners' experiences abroad lay ground to some theories trying to account for the students' experiences in the host cultures and the strategies they adopt to cope with diversities. For example, according to the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1969), being in an unfamiliar cultural environment is accompanied with the attempt to seek out, enjoy, understand, share, talk, and trust people with whom they share similar characteristics. These characteristics include interests, values, religion, group affiliation, physical attributes and other aspects on which human beings differ.

Another stream of thought suggests that societies can be located on a continuum of how close or distant they are with respect to their sociocultural features (Babiker, Cox and Miller, 1980). Hence, for example, Algeria and Tunisia would be culturally closer to each other than Algeria and England in terms of structural and value elements such as language, religion, education, or legal system. The culture distance hypothesis (Hofstede, 2001) predicts that the wider the cultural distance gap between individuals is, the more challenged they will be and the harder the experience could be. Cultural distance here refers to the degree to which the shared norms and values in one society differ from those of another society (ibid). However, there are some inadequacies related to the culture distance hypothesis carrying important implications for the research. The hypothesis focuses more on what sets cultures apart rather than what brings them together. Additionally, increased communication and interactions are bridging the wide gap of cultural differences through encouraging the convergence of cultural systems (Webber, 1969).

Literature also shows that international experience and acculturation reduce also from the cultural distance (Shenkar, 2001). Intercultural exposure is a means to familiarise people with cultures that differ from their original one, and in doing so, reduces from the cultural distance created by the lack of the understanding of diversity. In the present research, intercultural experience might provide students with possibility

to familiarise themselves with differences and hence reduce the cultural differences' gap.

According to the social identity theory, another related theoretical principle adopted by this research, people categorise themselves in terms of in-groups of people sharing similar characteristics, and out-groups of people having different characteristics (Tajfel, 1970, 1981). Self and other categorisation (Social Identity Theory, Tajfel, 1970) revolves around the fact that when a person is faced with unfamiliarity, he/she tends to reduce the feeling of stress engendered by the loss of the sense of belonging to a group through sociocultural categorisation. The sojourner, hence, tries to look for similarities between him/her and a particular group and identify with that group (in-group), and distance him/herself from the group (s) which has different sociocultural characteristics (out-group).

The process of navigating and adapting to a new culture unquestionably entails some levels of stress, anxiety, and psychological ups and downs. Some researchers agree that, the more cultural differences exist between the host and the home culture, the higher the stress level will be (Dunbar, 1992; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). A large body of literature deals with the psychological hardships sojourners encounter while abroad (e.g. Berry, 1997; Byram, 2000). In the next section, I will go through the two main models accounting for the psychological difficulties accompanying the intercultural immersion experience: the culture shock and acculturative stress.

2.10.1. Culture Shock

When a person is put in an unfamiliar context, in a culture different from his or hers, the exchange may trigger a culture shock (Pedersen, 1995). Culture shock affects people in different ways. It is an internalised construct developed in reaction or response to new, unfamiliar environments and situations (ibid). The term 'culture shock' was first coined by Oberg, who put forward the idea that culture shock is engendered by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and

symbols of social intercourse (1960, p. 176). Another definition put forward by Byram et al. (2000) brings together the unfamiliar and the negative effects of experiencing culture shock: '*Culture shock is the psychological and social disorientation caused by confrontation with new or alien culture*' (2000, p. 165). In this section I will review several models of Culture Shock that have been proposed in the literature over the decades.

On a large scale, culture shock reactions are regarded as reactions engendered by the feeling of loss. These reactions include confusion, stress, anxiety, and the feeling of rejection when faced with an inability to understand others or predict their behaviours (Byram et al. 2002: 165). Generally, the sojourner enjoys a tourist-like experience at the beginning of his stay (characterised by curiosity and thrill to discover the new) before undergoing the culture shock where he either develops overwhelmingly negative attitudes or moves onto a cross cultural learning stage (Hayward, 2000).

Culture shock is understood by some theorists (Pedersen, 1995; Oberg, 1960; Byram, 2000) as a long process taking place outside one's familiar milieu. Pedersen suggests that the culture shock '(1) is a process and not a single event, (2) may take place at many different levels simultaneously as the individual interacts with a complex environment, (3) Becomes stronger or weaker if the individual interacts with a complex environment, (4) teaches the individual new coping strategies which contribute to future success, and (5) applies to any radical change presenting unfamiliar or unexpected circumstances' (1995, p. vii).

There is, however, some confusion in the literature on cultural transition as to exactly when the culture shock takes place. In Lysgaard's (1955) model (figure 2, p.74), the culture shock model follows a U shape curve; the first stage is characterised by positive feelings, followed by the maladjustment stage characterised by stress and anxiety (culture shock),

and ending with adjustment where the sojourner is familiar to the new environment and copes well with the differences.

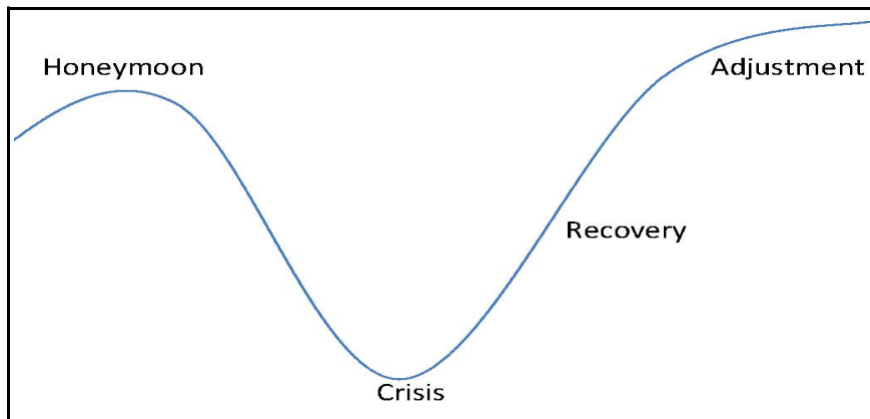


Figure 2. Lysgaard's culture shock model (1955)

In Oberg's model (1960) in figure 3 below, adjustment is reached after four different stages. The honeymoon stage is the first stage of admiration and fascination, the second stage is the hostility and aggression one, followed by the recovery stage when the individual starts to get used to the new cultural environment and then reach the final adjustment stage of adaptability.

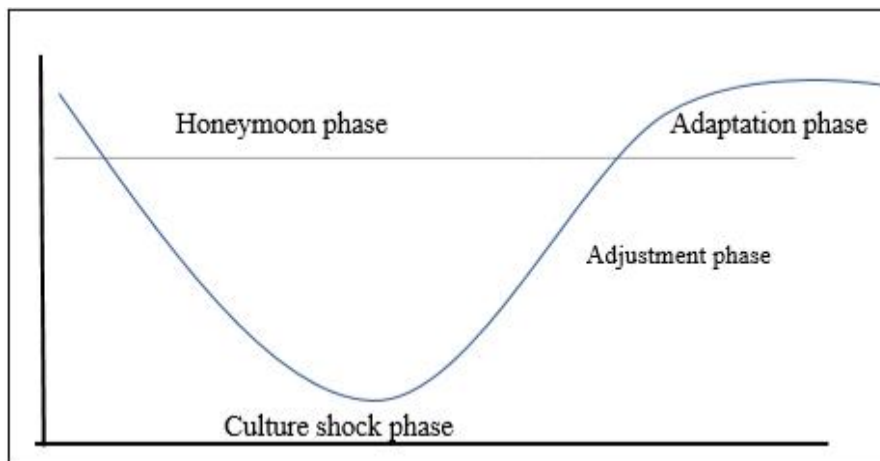


Figure 3. Oberg's culture shock curve (1960)

Another model accounting for the process of sojourners' adaptability was proposed by Kim (2008). She developed a model of the stress adaptation growth process (figure 4, p.75) that each individual passes through to reach an appropriate adjustment to the host culture. Kim (2008) focuses in the stress-adaptation-growth model on the fact that stress is inevitable during the experience of change and adaptability. Stress in this case is a conflict where identity is between the desire to retain old habits and customs in keeping with the original identity, and the necessity to adapt one's behaviour to the new cultural context (ibid). Kim's model suggests that the stress-adaptation-growth is a dynamic process, and each stressful experience is accompanied by negative feelings, which help the individual to develop his adaptive energy. The stress-adaptation-growth model will be further elaborated in the theoretical framework chapter.

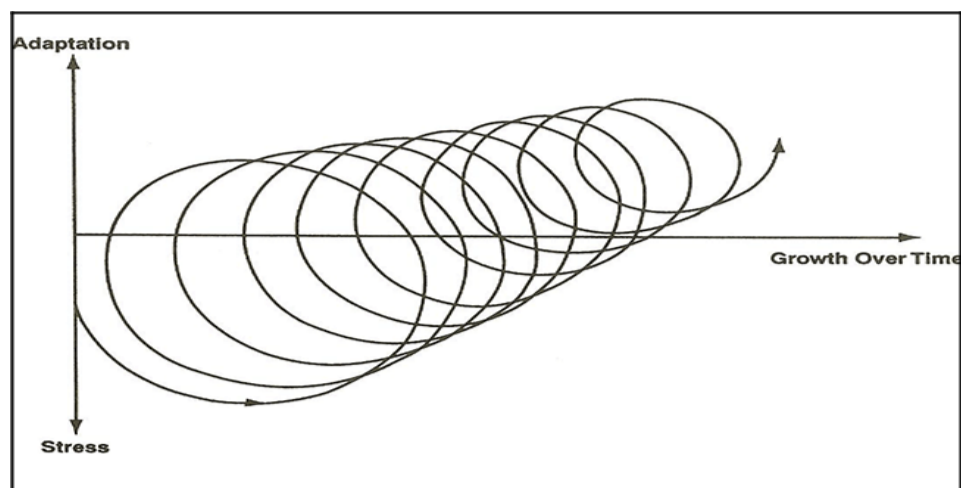


Figure 4. The process of cross-cultural adaptation:
The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic (Kim, 2001)

Although this research is not investigating the process students go through once they are back to the home culture, it is worth pointing at the W-curve (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) model of reverse culture shock (figure 5, p.76). The W-Curve is a predictable pattern of the stages the sojourner experiences to reach cultural acceptance and adaptation. It adds to the previous models a stage which explains the psychological and sociocultural adaptation hardships faced by the individual when he or she returns to the original culture (home).

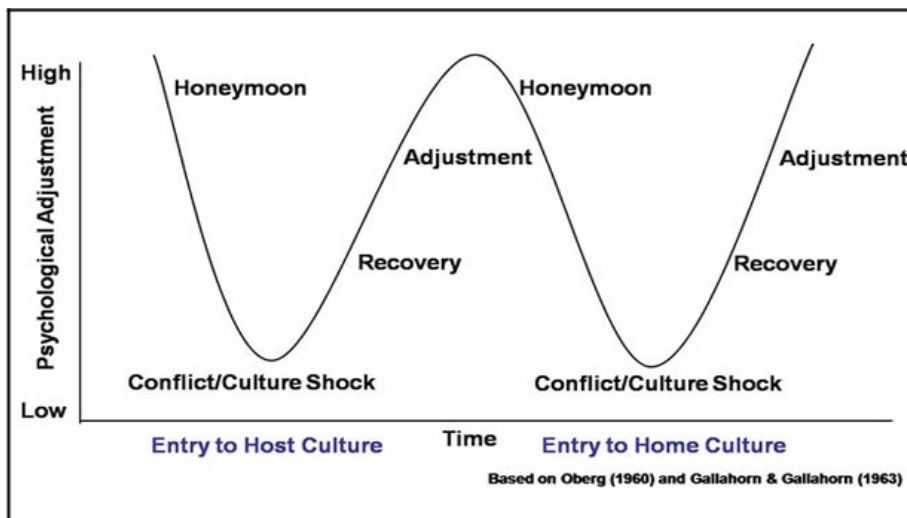


Figure 5. The W-Curve (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)

The reverse culture shock can be experienced as the person returns home after a period abroad. The W-Curve adds the re-entry shock; a set of new expectations from the returning sojourner that are not met in the original environment. The reverse culture shock is similar to Oberg's model (1960) with the final stage being re-adaptation to the home country's culture.

What all the previously mentioned models have in common is the identification of the first stage as a stage of excitement and admiration of the new cultural environment. The adjustment phase is better understood as a process of change characterised by a high level of stress as the sojourners encounters the unfamiliarity of the new cultural milieu, and a tendency for this stress to decrease as a result of continuous contact and familiarisation with the new socio-cultural norms and values (Ward et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have not accounted for the stress and adaptation experiences of Algerian students abroad and the cultural difficulties related to their sojourning experience. Most studies investigated American students experiences abroad (e.g., Miller, 1993; Twombly, 1995; Farrell & Suvedi, 2003) mainly due to the great number of study abroad programmes as a result of the American government advocacy for increasing international literacy among students (National Security Education Act of 1991). Other studies accounted for other cultural groups such as Japanese, European, Chinese, and British students (e.g., Hanamitsu, 2015, Koyanagi, 2018).

What is worth mentioning is that the culture shock is subjectively complex and hard to accurately measure. In the previously mentioned literature in this section, it seems that the model follows a smooth linear adaptive process, which is not the case in reality. Changes occur depending on events and crises in a non-regular movement of change. Reaching adaptability is a complex process through which the sojourner develops an ability to handle the "*stress and adaptation, learning and unlearning, acculturation and deculturation, crisis and resolution*" (Kim, 1988: 57). Reaching the adaptability stage is what helps students develop their intercultural identity as they reach beyond their cultural ties and boundaries. Hence, this research aims at investigating the student's reactions to the unfamiliar and observing their living abroad experience, the results of present research data analysis may add to the culture shock model, relate to it, or challenge it.

2.10.1. Acculturative Stress

During the period of adapting to a new environment and navigating its sociocultural system, sojourners can face some challenges, such as language barriers, sociocultural differences, and communicative misunderstandings. The challenges accompanying the adaptability process cause a certain level of stress due to the sociocultural differences and the unfamiliarity encountered by the individuals (Lueck & Wilson, 2010). The stress caused by the process of adapting/acculturating to a new site has been labelled 'acculturative stress' (Berry, 1970).

The construct of acculturative stress was first coined by Berry (1970). It is defined as '*an immigrant's response to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact*' (Berry, 2006, p.43). Going further to elaborate on the type of responses displayed by the sojourner, Lueck and Wilson (2010) state that acculturative stress is '*the reduction in mental health and well-being of ethnic minorities that occurs during the process of adaptation to a new culture*' (p.48). Berry (1997) identifies a range of elements causing acculturative stress: 1. physical related to factors such as unfamiliarity of

social structures and systems, 2. social stressors such as limited social networks, and homesickness, 3. cultural factors related to cultural and linguistic differences, 4. functional stressors accompanied with financial situation, transport system, and change in family structure. Hence, students studying abroad are faced with the necessity to cope with the new economic system, unfamiliarity of social rules and norms, and hardships of prejudices, stereotypes, and social marginalisation (Berry et al., 1977; Thalhammer et al., 2000).

In order to cope with the stressors of the new host environment, Berry (2005) identifies the behaviours of integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization as acculturation strategies. Skills such as language proficiency, social competences, and cultural awareness are important factors in the process of acculturation. Table 6 summarises the strategies used by sojourners in their process of acculturation to reach sociocultural adaptation (Kim & Omzio, 2005)

Acculturation Coping Strategies	
Assimilation	- Adaptation to the host culture and rejection of the home original culture (Kim & Omzio, 2005).
Integration	-Happens when the sojourner successfully meets the demands of the host culture. -The ability of the sojourner or migrant to fulfil the behavioural and social demands of both the original and host culture (Hong et al., 2000)
Separation	-The adherence to the original culture. It occurs when the individual emphasizes his original cultural identity and is not interested in acquiring an intercultural knowledge about the host culture.
Marginalization	-Occurs when the sojourner rejects both the home and host country's cultures, which entails a failure to reach sociocultural adaptation (Kim & Omzio, 2005)

Table 6. The main acculturation strategies used by sojourners, as generated from Berry (2001) Model

Despite the adaptation challenges and the acculturative stress, a body of literature suggests that stress caused by sociocultural diversities encountered by the sojourner can lead to positive effects (e.g. Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006). Similar to the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic put forward by Kim (2001), the positive effects accompanying the acculturation stress are labelled as stress-related-growth (Park, 2006). These positive effects result from the individual's ability to develop personal strength as a result of traumatic, stressful life events. Hence, from a stress/adaptability-related-growth standpoint, Algerian students taken in this research can use stress to develop positive changes such as the creation of coping strategies and resources for psychological health/fitness.

While the culture shock models explain the sojourners' experiences as a process consisting of different phases, the acculturative stress perspective focuses on the identification of different coping strategies triggered by the stress individuals experience as a result of their intercultural exposure. Culture shock and acculturative stress models focus on the difficulties caused by sociocultural unfamiliarity and the factors driving the need for intercultural adaptability. It is worth reminding the reader that all the stress-adaptation theories previously mentioned were developed based on research tackling intercultural experiences of students pertaining to different cultural backgrounds other than the Algerian one. Hence, this research's deep investigation of the intercultural experience of Algerian students can build up on the previously mentioned models and generate results which may add up to the existing literature. To do so, a thorough theoretical framework is needed to serve as a basis of the whole construction of the present thesis.

2.11. Conclusion to Chapter 2

This review has demonstrated that international students' experiences of overseas study have been extensively researched. Literature shows that through the intercultural experience provided by study abroad programmes, students are challenged cognitively and emotionally since they are outside their comfort zone faced with the unfamiliar and the unknown. Collectively, this review of the literature has repeatedly demonstrated that studying abroad is associated with a large number of beneficial outcomes. Outcomes researched are well documented and can be described in affective, behavioural and cognitive terms (Hoffa, 2010).

The review has established that the intercultural learning process achieved through intercultural immersion and encounters can be associated with the development several skills and competencies that are related to the development of intercultural identity. This association is worthy of further investigation to ascertain if the outcomes of intercultural immersion experience through studying abroad have a role in the development of intercultural identity.

Through this survey of the literature, it became clear that previous studies have taken American, European, or Chinese students as a case or sample population. However, no study has taken the case on Algerian students and looked at their intercultural experience. Algerian students, coming from an Arab, Berber, African cultural background may live the experience very differently. Furthermore, theories related to intergroup relations, social construction of knowledge, and the process of intercultural transformation have been mostly tested within western setting and cultures (Wetherell, 1982) and results cannot be overgeneralised to non-western cultures. Hence, there appears to be a gap in the literature in that no research investigated the process that Algerian students might undergo to develop their intercultural identity through their exposure and encounter with diversities outside their country of origin.

The aim of this research is to explore the role of study abroad programmes in facilitating the students' intercultural identity development, including discussions about how intercultural knowledge construction and interaction experiences with other cultures affects the students' intercultural development and their study abroad experience. The research will also examine the necessity or redundancy pre-departure intercultural training and in-experience orientation in the success of the students' overall experience abroad. All the literature reviewed about the culture shock, acculturative stress and adaptation, study abroad programmes, expatriate literature, intercultural identity, will help to guide this research and add understanding to the topics being investigated. The next chapter will outline the theoretical framework upon which this study is based.

Chapter 3

The Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction to Chapter 3

Cultural identities are historical, relational, and contextual constructs, which constitute permanent and fluid components of identity (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Cultural identity comprises shared symbols, names, labels, and norms that are passed on from one group to another and guide the individual in distinguishing between groups and members (Collier, 1998). It is worth mentioning that this research views cultural identity as dynamic rather than static and not changing. Identity is considered here as formed between and among persons in different communication situations (conversations, relationships, group interactions).

It is important to emphasize that the way we view ourselves comprises multiple personal and group-based identities that are shaped through our qualities and multiple experiences, as well as the roles we socially undertake and groups we identify with (Spreckles & Kotthoff, 2009). Hence, cultural identity is one among different other identities that the person uses to define and orient himself in different communicative situations. Identity is not constructed in isolation, but within a social context and through social participation and engagement (Burr, 1995). This view is shared between the three theories that this research framework is built on under the comprehensive umbrella of social constructionism: the communicative theory of identity (Hecht et al., 1993), the stress-adaptation-growth theory (Kim, 2001), and the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978).

The theories that this research adopts share the premise that identity is better understood in its context. They also share the view that sociocultural exposure and communication help the individual to build a knowledge that would enable him to construct an organizational system to place himself in the society and structure his identity accordingly. Bringing the three theories together under the same framework will provide a comprehensive view of identity development integrating community and sociocultural practices, communication, social relations, self-concept and self-

positioning, psychological state and feelings, and intercultural learning. In the following section, I will start with the broader umbrella of social constructionism and place the three theories under it, and then go through the theories and clarify how each will serve in this investigation.

3.2. Social Constructionism

Intercultural identity follows the premise that our identity is fluid and pliable (Pitts, 2010), able to adapt to the constant cultural changes it goes through in different environments. In the middle of such unfamiliar contexts, the individual engages in intercultural contact through which he develops new understanding, knowledge, and awareness (ibid). This knowledge construction through the sharing of perspectives, views, and experiences in communities forms the core focus of social constructionism.

Social constructionism has its core in the assumption that the cultural environment influences the individual self and that the human nature is constructed through social and cultural factors. In this vein, Burr (1995) asserts that '*the understanding of the world is socially constructed through daily interactions between people in the course of their everyday life*' (2015: 4). She adds that such interactions provide a wide range of possible social constructs of events inviting different kinds of actions. Social constructionism adopts the idea that we achieve a subjective reality by means of primary socialisation through being given a place and identity in society (Burr, 1995). Hence, our identity originates from the social realm.

Within a similar line of thought, Berger and Luckman (1966) claim that reality is socially constructed, and the most effective social experiences are the interactive ones. Berger and Luckmann are concerned with the nature and construction of knowledge: how it emerges and how it comes to have the significance for society. They assert that intercultural knowledge is an important constituent of the development of identity which is considered a phenomenon that emerges from the social exchange between individual and society. Once crystallised, identity is maintained, modified, or even

reshaped by social interactions. Berger and Luckman (1991) believe that the everyday social interactions generate a habitualization. That is, any frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced without much effort. They do not deny the possibility of socialisation failure, but limit it to extreme cases of organic pathology.

Our identity is socially constructed through discourse and social practices (Burr, 1995). Identity is a continuous developmental process taking place inside a social and cultural framework and not in isolation from it (Ivanic, 1998; Le Roy, 1994). The present research participants are enrolled in a six months study abroad programme which is enabling them to experience intercultural diversities. Basing the research on the constructionism paradigm would lead to frame the path to understand how this social intercultural experience would influence their identity development through their constructed knowledge in natural setting (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Theories adopted in this research share the same premise that identity is constructed through social engagement and discursive practices.

3.3. The Communicative Theory of Identity

The communicative theory of identity (CTI) was presented in a research investigating ethnic differences in communication and describing the nature of inner and intra ethnic communication (Hecht et al in Gudykunst, 2005). The theory views identity formation as an ongoing process of self and other communication instead of final product of communication (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). This approach focuses on the mutual influence between identity and communication and how identity defines the person and reflects the relations and social roles he undertakes through communication (Hecht et al., 2003). The social relations and roles internalised by the individual as identities are displayed as a social behaviour through communicative practices. The theory states that identity exists in the social spheres and embraces the individual and social relations as loci of identity. According to the CTI, there are 4 loci of identity merging the individual: self-identity, communication, relationships, and

society. The following table (table 7, p.85) summarizes the 4 loci of identity:

The Four Loci of Identity	
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The individual self-concept or self-image - It exists at the individual level of analysis as personal (individual) characteristics.
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identity is mutually formed in relationships -It constitutes 4 levels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ascribed identity: the identity shaped by the individual partially through internalizing how others see him. 2. Identification through the individual's relationship with other (e.g., someone's spouse, friend, parent) 3. Relational identity to other identities: the ability of having multiple identities existing in relation to each other (e.g., teacher & parent) 4. Relation identification: a unit of identity (e.g., a couple can establish a relational identity (Baxter, 2004))
Enacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The individual's expressed identity -Identity is enacted in social behaviour and symbols.
Communal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It revolves around how collectivism defines groups' identities. It is mainly about the group characteristics.

Table 7. The four loci of identity in the CTI (Jung, Hecht, Warren, & Krieger, 2005)

The layers of identity are all facets of the expression of the enacted identity. The CTI sees these identities as a juxtaposition, they may interact and overlap. Hecht (2005) defines the interaction of the identity layers as the interpenetration. For example, the student sojourner personal identity may lead him to express a communal identity shared with his co-nationals, which will in turn reinforce the same personal identity. The enactment and expression of each layer is not static and changes according to the lived

experiences of students and their trial to reach adaptability (Hecht et al., 2005). The enactment of identity can leave ambiguous areas of identity which were coined as 'identity gaps' (ibid.). An individual expressed identity can be different from his or her own self views. For example,

one can describe himself as tolerant but act judgmental towards differences of others. The tension brought by the identity gaps may result in anger, stress, anxiety, and hardship to socialise (Smith & Kearney, 2016). For sojourners, the gap occurs between the personal and relational levels due to an intercultural gap that is not accepted, appreciated, or understood (ibid.). The gap may also be due to the experiences of labelling and social marginalisation which do not align with their personal identity (Lidjadi & Schalkwyk, 2017).

3.3.1. Why the Communicative Theory of Identity?

The CTI provides a solid structure to study a cultural phenomenon in depth (Hecht, 2005). In this study, the use of the CTI approach to investigate the development and change of the students' intercultural identity will allow an investigation of the relational and communal layers and their influence of the students' personal and enacted identities. The use of the CTI is important in the case of my study as it provides a practical framework to analyse the Algerian students' intercultural identity development during their study abroad experience in the UK. The four layers of identity proposed by Hecht and his colleagues (2005) are seen as connected but also overlapping and contradicting at times creating identity gaps. It is between those identity gaps that students will need to find their balance, adjust to novelties, and expand their worldview. This theory will help me explore the role of communication in the host culture in influencing students' intercultural adaptability and learning, and eventually intercultural identity. Also, this research is interested not in the identity gaps per se, but in how students will deal with them and how the complexity of identity is displayed in daily students' behaviour and communicative engagements. Hence, in the section below, I will discuss

how intercultural identity can be formed through intercultural communication and different relational roles. Also, I will tackle the identity gaps between the relational, personal, and communal layers. The enacted identity is considered as an expression of a juxtaposition of the previous personal, relational, and communal identities.

3.3.2. The Personal Layer

Cultural identity is ever changing and adjusting in different cultural environments. This can be seen through the personal layer. Students participating in this research developed their self-concept in a single cultural environment and were later placed in a different cultural environment culturally diverse and rich. Through this new cultural lifestyle which requires coping to enjoy the experience, a hybrid intercultural self-concept may emerge (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2017). This multicultural host environment can push students to adapt to a range of cultural diversities. Yet, the absence of previous diverse cultural exposure in their home country can be problematic as they might fail to be connected to several cultures and identify with multiple cultural groups (Moore & Barker, 2012). Thus, within the personal layer, there is a tension between the ability to adapt and the inability to take in different cultural systems.

The inability to relate to a new culture can cause the loss of the sense of belonging and connection which is prominent to the element of perception of self (Lijadi & Schalkwyk, 2017). Since students moved away from what they call 'home' which represents to them everything they connected with since their birth, the lack or absence of the sense of belonging (to a particular group, culture, or environment) is assumed to result in the feeling of marginalisation (Fail, Walker, & Thompson, 2004).

3.3.3. The Relational Layer

During their experience abroad, students can engage in different communicative exchanges with members of the host culture. This engagement may influence their intercultural identity development both positively and negatively. The relational layer proposes identity is jointly formed through relationships (Hecht et al., 2005). There is a prevalent gap between the personal and relational layers of the CTI. While the personal layer emphasises the avowed identities, the relational layer focuses on the impact of others' views on the individual through ascribed identities (Smith & Kearney, 2016). The CTI posits that at this layer, the individual develops and shapes his identity partially by internalising how others view him (Hecht, 2005). Hence, the theory will help in accounting for the impact that others' views have on the students' formation of an intercultural identity as fostering its development or hindering it.

3.3.4. The Communal Layer

The communal layer acts as a bridge covering the gap between the personal and relational layers. At this layer, the individual's identity is attached to a larger group identity. Group identities are formed through common shared traits and group experiences (Hecht et al., 2005). For sojourners in this research, studying abroad engages them in an experience of diversities that they have never experienced before. Facing a different living system and cultural norms and values, their communal layer of identity lies in the shared identification as the group of Algerian students in the UK. Students, in this case, may start communicating and engaging first with like-minded individuals who experience the same mobility or sojourning experience.

Research related to the differences between personal and enacted identities posits a number of theories. Petronio's (1991) theory of Communication Boundary Management implies the existence of disclosed and undisclosed parts of self. However, her theory is more focused on the way individuals manage impressions and control private information

rather than implications for their identities. Another theory is the Silencing of Self Theory (Jack, 1991, 1999). The latter posits that unexpressed and suppressed parts of identity cannot be seen. This theory (SOS) is more concerned with the less intentional and passive ways of expressing one's self (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The CTI sees social behaviour as an aspect of the self. It asserts that the person's sense and perception of self-development are shaped and reshaped in the process of social interaction. The CTI also emphasises identity as relational and considers it as a discursive process. As this research focuses on the development of intercultural identity through immersion, exposure, and discursive engagements, the CTI will help account for the internalisation of different norms and practices in the form of identities.

3.4. The Communicative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural adaptation has been investigated extensively across various disciplines in social sciences since the 1930s in the United States as it was and is considered as a nation that experienced a great deal of emigration (e.g., Spicer, 1968). Recently, research tackled cross cultural and intercultural adaptation in various geographical contexts, such as European countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and China among many others (e.g., Berry, 1980; Tian & Lowe, 2013). The cross-cultural adaptation is a concept describing the process by which individuals who are relocated to an unfamiliar environment establish, re-establish, and maintain stable and functional relationships with those new sociocultural milieus (Kim, 2001:31). The concept emphasises the continuous trials to achieve a balance between the sojourner's cultural internal conditions and the new host environment's conditions to reach a 'fit' into the host culture and a functional relationship with it.

The need for the conceptual integration of the research investigating intercultural changes when crossing geographical boundaries is addressed by Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015). This theory provides a broad insight into what happens over the sojourning experience when the person crosses cultural and

geographical boundaries, and what factors facilitate or hinder his adaptation to the new host environment. Given its comprehensive and integrative nature, Kim's theory is used in this research to examine the complexity of the cross-cultural adaptation process and the influence that exposure and the ability to fit into the new culture on the development of intercultural identity.

According to Kim's communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (CTCCA), individuals go through a dynamic process during their intercultural exposure, which results in a qualitative transformation (Patron, 2007). Sojourners need to adapt to the changes so as to function adequately in the new cultural milieu. Kim (2001) sees adaptation as an open system consisting of: acculturation and deculturation, the stress adaptation growth, and the intercultural transformation. In the next section, I will go through the comprehensive model put forward by Kim to account for the process that the sojourner goes through to reach intercultural adaptability and intercultural transformation.

3.4.1. Acculturation and Deculturation

The process of cross-cultural adaptation takes place through the communicative interface of the individual and the new sociocultural milieu. The process entails two interrelated sub-processes summed up in figure 6 below;

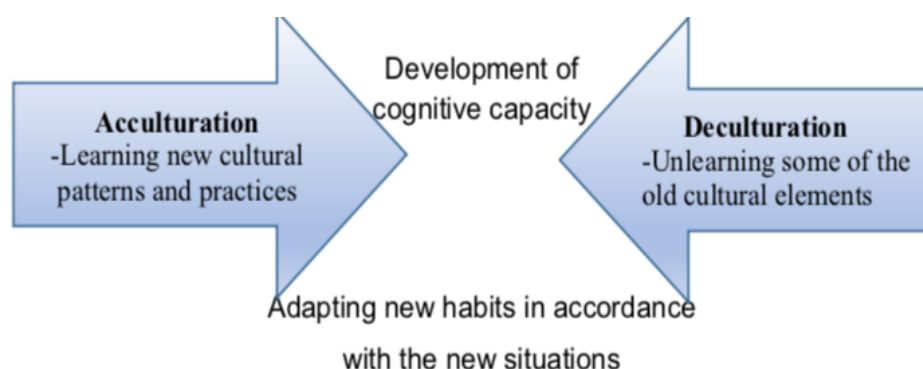


Figure .6. Sub-processes of the cross-cultural adaptation process (Kim, 2017)

During the intercultural exposure to diversities of the host environment, sojourners tend to display new responses adapted to the situation they are put into. The act of learning something new from the intercultural experience may entail losing some of the old habits (Kim, 2017). The ongoing interplay between acculturation and deculturation leads to the development of new adaptive changes that are the ‘surface’ areas of the original cultural habits (e.g., food, dressing, music). The longer the exposure is, the deeper the changes are. These changes may reach the notion of self in relation to culture, values, aesthetics, and emotional sensibilities (ibid.).

The acculturation process is influenced by four main factors explained in table 8:

Personal communication factor	Environmental factor	Social Communication	Individual predispositions
<p>-The sojourner's cognitive, behavioural, and effective ability to communicate effectively in the host culture (Hall, 2005)</p> <p>-The capacity to communicate in accordance with the host cultural norms and practices.</p>	<p>-Aspects the host culture brings to the acculturation experience as the receptivity and host conformity pressure (Hall, 2005).</p>	<p>-Mass and Interpersonal communication (Hall, 2005)</p>	<p>-The unique temperament and sensibilities each person brings with his adaptability process.</p>

Table 8: Factors influencing the acculturation process

Kim's (2001) model of intercultural adaptation considers various factors influencing individuals' cultural adaptation to a new society (see table 8). These factors relate to individuals' predispositions such as preparedness for change, ethnic proximity, and adaptive personality as exogenous variables influencing the process of intercultural communication. The model also considers environmental factors, such as host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and ethnic group strength. In Kim's model, individuals' interactions with both host members and coethnic members and their usage of both host (i.e. Host Mass Communication) and ethnic (i.e. Ethnic Mass Communication) media are major components that directly influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation.

It is worth mentioning that one of the key predispositions influencing the cross-cultural adaptability process is the cultural preparedness, or the readiness to learn and adapt to the new cultural environment including the extent of the cultural learning students had before their sojourning experience abroad. New sojourners who are better prepared for the host culture are likely to engage in their adaptation process with more realistic expectations (Black & Gregersen, 1990; Searle & Ward, 1990). Moreover, personality can be a very influential factor in the adaptability process. Personality strength is known as the internal capacity to take in cultural shocks from the environment and bounce back without being seriously damaged (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2014). People who are open, strong, and positive are less likely to give up when facing confusion and stress, and more likely to take risks under challenging situations. In doing so, they are better able to make the necessary adjustments to facilitate their intercultural transformation.

3.4.2. The Stress-Adaptation-Growth Cycle

Kim (2001) asserts that each adaptive change entails a stress in the individual psyche that is rooted in the identity conflict between the edges of the resistance to change and maintaining the old habits, and the need to adapt one's behaviour to seek harmony within the new culture. This back and forth struggle between two conflicting forces results in moments of crisis. Such moments are characterised by stress, anxiety, and confusion that may lead sojourners to withdrawal, avoidance, or opting for a hostile behaviour towards the host environment (Kim, 2001). For most people, situations of stress and confusion push them to adapt new behaviours and habits, and to embrace the new challenges and adapt to the new sociocultural milieu. Stress, in this case, is an important trigger to the adaptation process leading to self-organisation and psychological growth that is '*an increased complexity in an individual's internal communication system*' (Kim, 2017: 5).

The experience of stress, adaptation, and growth are explained in the theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001). The theory provides a figure (figure 4, p.75) displaying psychological movements in the forward and upward directions of increased chances of adaptability and growth in the new cultural environment. It is a continual, cyclic pattern in which each stressful experience is responded to by a state of regression or falling which, in its turn, creates an energy that pushes the sojourner to leap forward. The repeated process takes part alongside the sociocultural and linguistic challenges faced by sojourners in the host society

The model (see figure 4, p.75) follows a pattern that juxtaposes the new and the old, attachment and detachment, progression and regression, integration and disintegration, construction and destruction (Kim in Gudykunst & Mody, 2002). Kim (2001) asserts that the process of adapting to a new cultural environment is spiral where any new challenge faced in the host milieu adds to the personal growth of the individual. The model posits that whenever the sojourner faces a situation where the old

cultural patterns do not work, he/she will experience stress stemming from the confusion by the novelties and the inability to apply old habits in the new context. Stress may have negative outcomes when the individual engages in defensive behaviour while keeping his old habits and rejecting the change, or positive outcomes when the sojourner starts to respond to the new environment by changing his/her behaviour, which will then gradually lead to adaptation and growth.

The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic underlies a continuous process of identity engagement and disengagement (Kim, 2006). This dynamic is at the centre of our identity development, and the leap between the old identity and the creation of a new one aligning with the novelties faced in the new environment enables the sojourner to better adapt to the new intercultural encounters with better resourcefulness (Slavin & Kriegman, 1992). Overall, stress presents us with an opportunity of self-reorganisation. The identity conflict previously mentioned between holding on to the old cultural habits and adapting to the new cultural norms compels the sojourner to learn new cultural elements (Kim, 2017). In this vein, adaptation is about the individual's continuous trials, through direct and indirect contact with the new cultural environment, to maintain a functional relationship with the new milieu (ibid).

3.4.3. Intercultural Transformation and Intercultural Identity

Besides establishing a functional *fitness* in the host environment and a *psychological adaptation*, adaptive changes to the new environment also include the emergence of an *intercultural identity*. Kim (2017) asserts that intercultural identity is an unintended psychological development that goes beyond the boundaries of childhood enculturation. It is a self and other orientation that is not defined by the home culture or the new host culture (ibid). The emergent cultural identity includes two capabilities: *individualization* and *universalisation*.

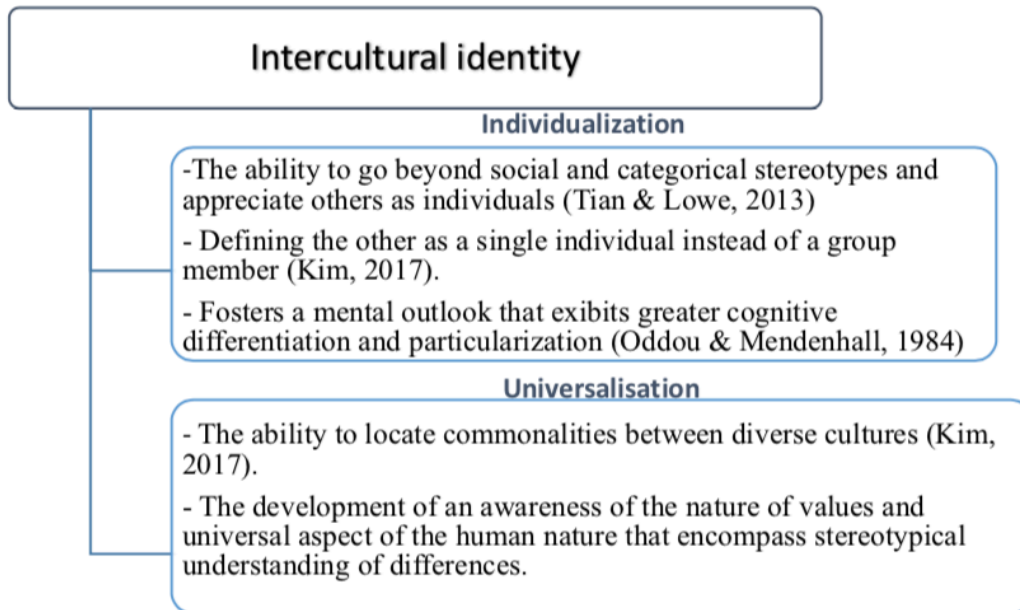


Figure.7. Components of intercultural identity (Kim, 2008)

In this sense, intercultural identity is developed through prolonged experiences of trial and error, such as in the case of Algerian students studying in the UK. The original cultural identity links students to their specific cultural group sharing the same cultural traits, while the intercultural identity leads him to encompass group boundaries and bond with different people and individuals different from him/her (Kim, 2001). Other scholars developed different concepts when dealing with intercultural identity transformation or development. Grotevant (1992) came with the concept of the 'adopted identity', and Phinney (1993) with 'achieved identity'. Both scholars emphasised the idea that cultural identity develops through the enculturation process starting from childhood and it develops as the individual comes into contact with diverse cultures. In this case, identity is not only influenced by the original culture but by the new cultural elements as well. In this stream of thought, Kim (2001) asserts that identity is a continuum from cultural to intercultural, in which boundaries of identity are extended and new life patterns are explored. According to Kim, an intercultural person is someone who internalized different cultural elements, and whose identity became broader and more open to transformation.

Intercultural identity develops usually without being noticed by people, when intercultural experiences gradually accumulate (Wichert, 1997). Intercultural identity is developed and shaped throughout the whole immersion experience and direct and indirect contact with the host environment. Kim (2001) argues that people may not be aware of the development of their intercultural identity during the process of intercultural adaptability. However, with the technological advancement and the globalised era we are living in, many people came to realise the need to have inclusive memberships and strengthening cultural ties between culturally diverse groups and individuals (Xiao-Dong, 2009). It is relevant to say that intercultural exposure pushes the individual to the direction of intercultural learning, perceptual refinement and self-other orientation (Kim, 1994, p. 1).

Kim's (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptability is based on a general system perspective (Kim, 1992, 2015; Ruben, 1983). This perspective assumes that individuals adapt to changes encountered in the new host environment and strive to reach a psychological equilibrium within the new sociocultural system. Kim's theory considers that both individual predispositions and environmental factors influence the sojourner's adaptability. However, Kim's theory does not take into consideration that environmental influences are not homogenous across individuals even if they live in the same environment. Moreover, sojourners are influenced by environmental factors differently according to the degree of their social involvement (e.g. sharing cultural resources, emotional support) with others from different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, Kim's model of intercultural adaptability posits that, while increased host receptivity might help one adapt in terms of reaching a psychological stability, happiness and a social fitness in a new culture, conformity pressure will help them adapt in terms of learning the cultural norms and values of the new host environment. However, the possibility of following the rules without reaching a psychological happiness and satisfaction is possible. Hence, the communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation is associated with other theories in this research to further account for the personal layer of identity development, analyse the tension

between the ability to adapt and the inability to take in different cultural systems (CTI), and account for the influence of others' perceptions on the development of the self-image (Social Identity Theory -SIT-).

The communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation has not been free of criticism. Scholars problematized Kim's view of culture and intercultural adaptation (e.g. Kramer, 2008). Kramer (2000b) for example, believes that the unlearning of the sojourner's original culture (i.e. deculturation (Kim, 2015) is neither desirable nor pleasant. Instead, he proposed the cultural fusion theory as an alternative to acculturation (Kramer & Croucher, 2017). The theory posits that sojourners who are strangers in the host environment constitute an integral part of the new cultural system and contribute to the society in which they are placed, and that sojourners and host culture members' cultural identities change and develop together. Kim's and Kramer's theories stem from different paradigms of sociological inquiry; the former represents a functionalist post-positivist view, while the latter represents a post-modernist critical cultural view. The differences are acknowledged, and both theories are understood in this research. However, resolving the theoretical differences goes beyond the scope of interest of this research.

3.4.4. Why the Communicative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation?

In this research, intercultural identity is not treated as a special final product of intercultural exposure, but as a mechanism operating all along the exposure experience. I am aware that an intercultural identity is an extension or continuum of the cultural identity. The former is characterised as the ability to reach cultural agreements, accept differences, take in different cultural elements, aligning oneself with the new cultural norms and demands, and achieve growth.

This theory provides ground explaining the capacity of using intercultural exposure to reshape and develop intercultural identity. It lays the ground to the idea that cultural learning (acculturation) allows the development of

new identities not to the detriment of the old original ones but as an extension that is regarded as an act of acceptance and appreciation of diversities. The theory will help in depicting the process of the students' intercultural transformation over the sojourning experience in the UK. Given its comprehensive nature, the theory will help in accounting for the complexity of adaptation process, and the role of intercultural exposure in developing students' intercultural identities, and the ups and downs students may go through to reach an intercultural transformation, personal growth, and a functional sociocultural fitness.

3.5. Social Identity Theory

Within the intercultural encounters, individuals find that their behavioural patterns and value systems are different from the others with whom they interact, and this generates a feeling of being misunderstood or simply different from the group (Weber, 2002). Generated by the feeling of unfitting into the new environment, the person develops a sense of group categorisation after a process of comparison followed by identification within a specific group and classification of other (out) groups (Turner et al., 1987; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Turner, 1975) is based on the premise that identity is better understood in the light of differences. It assumes that group behaviour is linked to the social identity and focuses on how individuals operate within social groups and how the social groups operate within the minds of the individuals. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that there are three mental processes involved in evaluating others as “us” or “them” (i.e. “in-group” and “out-group”). The processes are summarised in figure 8 below.

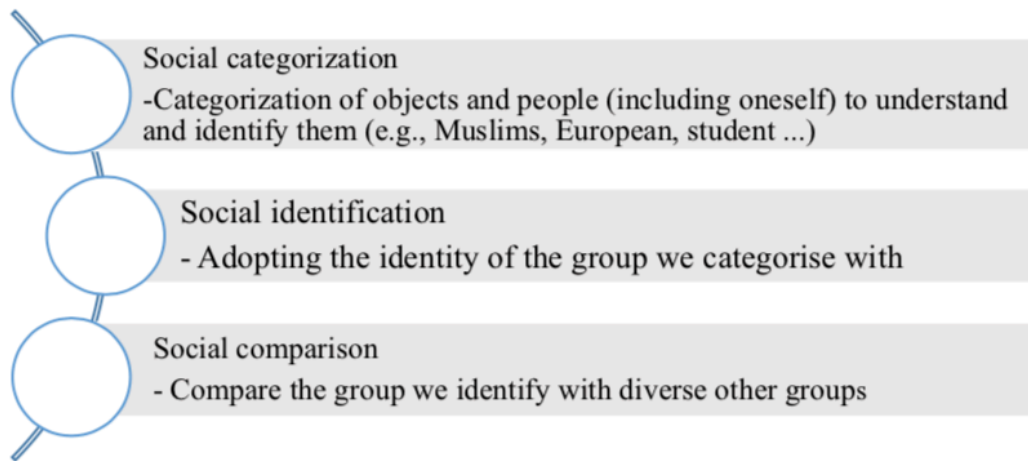


Figure.8. Social Identity Theory mental processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

The categorisation with in-groups is characterised by sharing similar cultural characteristics by the group members. Sociocultural comparison between socially and culturally diverse groups enables the sojourner to capture the similarities shared with in-groups (seen as a homogenous entity), and the differences captured within out-groups (Simon & Hamilton; Hallam et al., 1996). Through this categorisation of self and classification of other, the individual builds an organisational system to place himself within the society and structures his social identity.

The social identity theory mainly seeks to explain how identities influence the behaviour, feelings, and thoughts, and how they tie persons to the society in which they are (Tajfel, 1978). It accounts for the role of self-conception in group membership and intergroup relations. According to the theory, individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of their social group memberships in an attempt to establish a positive social identity. The theory proposes that the individual's self-concept is composed of social and personal identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In this respect, personal identity refers to the individual's unique characteristics regardless of his/her cultural or social group, and the social identity is the knowledge of membership to a particular social group and the meaning attached to it.

Early research adopting the social identity theory to intergroup relations often investigated political behaviour such as party affiliation (Kelly, 1988), trade union participation and Hindu-Muslim relations in India (Ghosh & Kumar, 1991). SIT, which aims to investigate how intergroup behaviour is rooted in the collective identity, was however, seen more relevant to social movements (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010). Later, the theory was adopted as a metatheoretical perspective by social psychologists (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). This research is novel because it takes this theory to investigate the sojourners' capacity of self and group categorisation and the role of acculturation in influencing their self and other identification.

SIT is described as '*part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership*' (Tajfel, 1978a, p.63). This description reflects the perspective that group membership provides individuals with a sense of their unique position and their role in the social world they belong to, and acts as a guide to the social behaviour associated with a particular group membership. Hence, individuals' way of acting depends on the way they see themselves and others in terms of group membership, and the extent to which they identify with that group. In fact, one of the fundamental assumptions that underpins the SIT is that groups are the main part of both social conflict and change (Reicher et al., 2012). Moreover, Tajfel and Turner (1986) describe a continuum of one's behaviour from the 'interpersonal' exchange, where the person's behaviour is based on his personal identity, to 'intergroup' exchange where the individual behaviour is informed by his social identity. The type of interchange depends on the setting, context, and relationship with the other.

Informed by social identity theory, this study assumes that during the intercultural exchange between students with others from different cultural background, the student may categorise the other as being similar or different, good or bad, right or wrong. Such categorisation, if negative,

may give rise to prejudices defined as cognitions of one social group about another group (Elligan, 2008) leading to the construction of barriers for intercultural exchange (Bartminski, 2009, (as cited in Lebedko, 2014). Such categorisations would yield the feeling of stress and discomfort (Kim, 2001). To encompass the feeling of stress, and as previously mentioned, students may either withdraw from any type on intercultural exchange or develop a motivation to join different cultural groups. Such motivation is yielded by the need to reduce uncertainty about other's perceptions, feelings, and behaviours, and self enhancement (Hogg, 2000).

3.5. Why Social Identity Theory?

The social identity theory is valuable to understand students' behaviour across group boundaries. It paves the way to explore to what extent their social identity may influence their perceptions, and whether their intercultural experience will help them to adjust their identity and identify with other groups. The theory will give insights on whether students will move beyond cultural boundaries and group ties to develop an intercultural identity. The social identity theory will provide basis to understand how students perceive norms, values, behaviours, and beliefs and behave within and across groups. The theory helps in identifying how students, through their engagement in social practices and their acculturation, tend to develop, or sustain, or derive different identities which may help them move beyond group favouritism and stereotypes. It will help clarify how identity development is relative not only to the individual but to the group and the context as well.

3.6. Diagram Summarizing the Theoretical Framework

The development of intercultural identity through study abroad programmes is a research with core interests placed within a multitude of scientific disciplines. Identity development in itself is a very wide and rich area of scientific inquiry. The present theoretical framework is used in order to accurately account for the process of intercultural identity development and the factors influencing the latter. The research views identity as fluid and changing and socially constructed through social and discursive practices. The present inquiry goes to see how identity develops through communication, social practices, self and other perception, social comparison and categorisation, and investigate how different sociocultural and psychological factors can help in the adaptability process or hinder it. Hence, three theories are used to form a comprehensive model to explicate the mechanism through which developing an intercultural identity is translated into behavioural, effective, and cognitive change displayed by Algerian students studying in the UK.

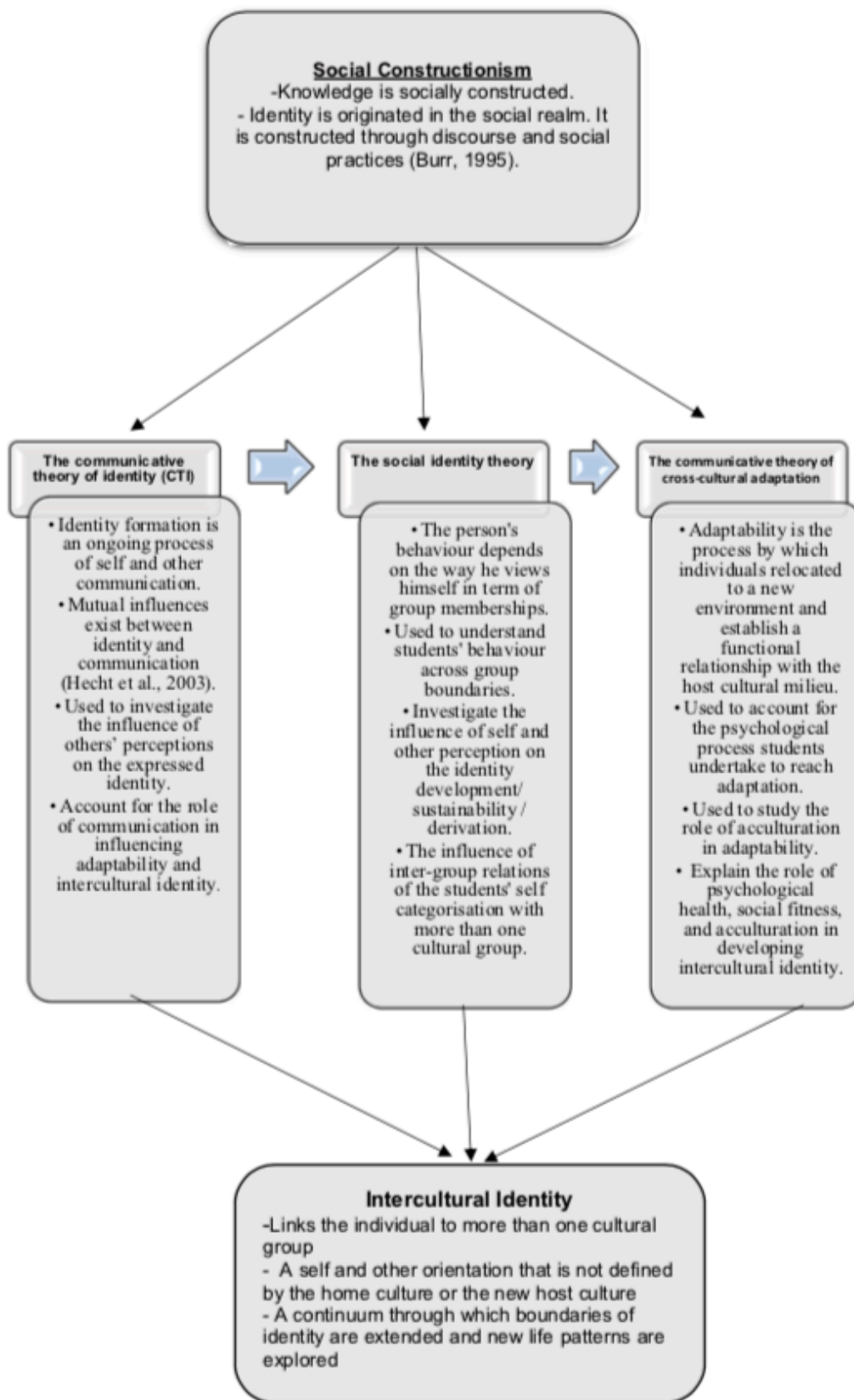


Figure 9. The intercultural identity development theoretical framework

3.7. Summary of Chapter 3

The third chapter of this thesis dealt with the theoretical framework structured to meet the research questions and lead towards a clear investigation of the development of Algerian students' intercultural identity through their study abroad experience in the UK. The theoretical framework is drawn upon the combination of the communicative theory of identity, the social identity theory, and the communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation. In this chapter, I discussed all the theories and explained the logic lying behind the use of each one of them. The theories used in this study are intended to provide the tools with which to explore the different internal and external factors which may influence the process of cultural transformation, and the possible identity tensions brought by cultural diversity and the strive to reach an intercultural fitness. This research views identity as socially constructed among individuals, societies, and groups, and constantly changing and developing over times and across contexts. On this basis, this inquiry tries to investigate how study abroad programmes can facilitate the students' intercultural identity development and the factors effecting this latter. The next chapter will outline the research methodology upon which this study is based.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction to Chapter 4

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology and the specific methods used in this study. The reader will remember that the aim of the study is to explore the effects of studying abroad on intercultural identity development. The study endeavours to investigate the students' intercultural transformation within a sociocultural framework that enables them to engage in discursive practices and a diverse cultural system in the host environment. Eight Algerian students participating in a six-month pre-session programme in a University in England were taken as a case study. The programme offered students an academic training as well as the opportunity to be immersed in a culturally diverse environment.

The present research project was informed by the constructionist interpretivist paradigm and used a qualitative research strategy. An ethnographic case study design was used to explore the process that students went through to adapt to the host environment and develop their intercultural identities, and to analyse the students' perspectives regarding how they perceive themselves and make sense of the world around them. Data was collected by means of two types of interviews, and participant observation. Semi structured interviews (SSI) with open questions were used with the intention of opening further discussions with the students about their cultural experiences outside the academic setting, their self and other perceptions, their outgroup relations, and intercultural interactions (Rapley, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Ethnographic interviews (EI) were also used to uncover the meanings participants made of their experiences and daily interactions. Ethnographic interviews were informed by participant ethnographic observations which enable the systematic ordering of data which will be framed into written accounts of the phenomenon being explored (Spradley, 1979; Atkinson et al., 2007).

I will start the chapter by giving an overview of the qualitative research methodology, the epistemological stance and ethnographic techniques used. I will then go to give an overview of the research design, the methods of data collection, and the research sampling. In order to provide a context

for understanding the themes generated by the data analysis, I will provide an overview of the participants and the context. This chapter will tackle the way this study would meet the evaluation criteria of qualitative research, and the research ethical issues. The researcher's reflexivity and positioning will also be addressed. Finally, I will provide a review of the data analysis and the methods used to analyze the data gathered.

4.2. Qualitative Research Strategy

In this study I take the view that research methodology is a way of systematically solving a research problem. The present research's methodology is an umbrella covering all the steps that I followed in studying my research problem, including the logic behind each step. The choice of the research methodology depended on the nature of the undertaken research and the types of questions to be explored. The focus of the study is the description and investigation of the new sociocultural experiences of Algerian students in England and the way in which these intercultural experiences influence their intercultural identity. Therefore, this study is guided by the qualitative research strategy and ethnographic design.

This study employed a qualitative research strategy. This is to say, it sought to explore, documents, and describe the complexities of lived events and situations, and understand the studied phenomenon from the sojourning students' frame of reference. The use of a qualitative inquiry was triggered by the willingness to investigate cultures and communities to generate sociocultural patterns to the researcher who can later make theoretical claims based on her findings (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2003) described qualitative inquiry in human and social sciences as taking place within the natural environment in which the events are ongoing and interactive. Following a qualitative research methodology will help in providing rich accounts of the students' intercultural immersion and interaction experiences taking part in their real-time natural contexts, and how they can influence their identity development.

This research followed the qualitative research inquiry as it uses rich descriptions as a basis to deepen our understanding of the social world. It is associated with words, language and experiences. Qualitative research is a collection of socially constructed realities based on historical and cultural perspectives, contextual meaningful experiences, and interactions (Wignall, 1998). The present qualitative research focused on the cultural and social everyday habits and experiences, and explored aspects of the students' thinking, learning, knowing, acting, and understanding themselves and their surroundings. It used a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove 2003). Because I was interested in reaching a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon, I followed a data collection procedure in the natural setting of the studied phenomenon. Hence, I was able to observe actions in their natural occurring context (Bogdin & Biklin, 2003).

Qualitative data collection can often take a significant amount of time. However, the fieldwork is a high-yielding means for investigating the *'relation between meaning-perspectives of actors and the ecological circumstances of action in which they find themselves'* (Erickson, 1986, p.127). The subjective meanings that the participants formed through their experiences were gathered using ethnographic techniques. Research data were collected by means of ethnographic observation and in-depth ethnographic interviews in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the key factors influencing the intercultural identity development of students during the study abroad programme?

RQ2: What behaviours and perceptions are associated with the development of intercultural identity during the study abroad programme?

RQ3: How can we facilitate the development of intercultural identity through study abroad programmes in the future?

This study followed a constructivist form of epistemology. In this research, I adopt the view that epistemology is defined as the study of the nature of knowledge and the justification for using specific methodologies (Schwandt, 1997). It describes how the knowledge is acquired and accounts for the theory of knowledge. Some researchers consider epistemology as the philosophy that explains what we know and how we know it (Goduka, 2012). Others claims that it is based on the nature of the relationship between the nature of the entity who holds the knowledge and what is known (Creswell, 2007). On a similar stream of thought, Denzin and Lincoln claim that '*Epistemology asks, how I know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Every epistemology implies an ethical-moral stance towards the world and the self on the researcher*' (2000: 175). Hence, it is important for the researchers to be aware of the frameworks upon which their research is based, and the assumptions that may lead their scientific inquiry.

This research adopted a constructivist approach to knowledge construction. The definition of constructivism that I chose to follow was one that posits that there is not a single defined truth, rather, the researcher's interpretation or construction is as 'true' as any other researcher's interpretation or construction as long as it works within a particular context (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Constructivists assert that the researcher constructs his understanding through giving meaning to what is observed (Watzlawick, 1984; Jonassen, 1991). Hence, the understanding of a certain phenomenon is reached through the researcher's active experience in it. This confirms that the use of ethnography in exploring the students' intercultural identity development throughout their experience abroad was suitable from the constructivism paradigm upon which this research was based as ethnography helped me live the experiences of my participants through doing a prolonged observation of phenomena happening in their natural contexts, and hence I constructed meanings through my participants' perspectives. Moreover, constructivism excludes the possibility of the influence that a dominant social 'reality' can have on the construction of the meaning (Held, 1990). That is, the researcher needs to include the role that social and cultural

factors play the construction of meaning and in the way the person perceives the world around him. The use of ethnography in the present inquiry helped in accounting for the sociocultural factors influencing students' perceptions of themselves and others, their knowledge construction, and their intercultural transformation.

My research was informed by Guba and Lincoln's view (1998) asserting that constructivist research is relativist, subjective, and transactional. Following a relativist position is based on acknowledging that there is not an objective established truth to be known (Hugly & Sayward, 1987). Subjectivism reflects the idea that the world is knowable, and the role of the researcher is to construct an understanding of the world (including the participants, psychological, and sociocultural factors) as they see it (Ratner, 2008). As for transactional, it means that factual knowledge is generated by interactions between elements of a rhetorical situation of which the final product is the individual's thoughts and perceptions (Berlin, 1987). The figure (figure 10, p.111) below summarizes the epistemological stance of the present research.

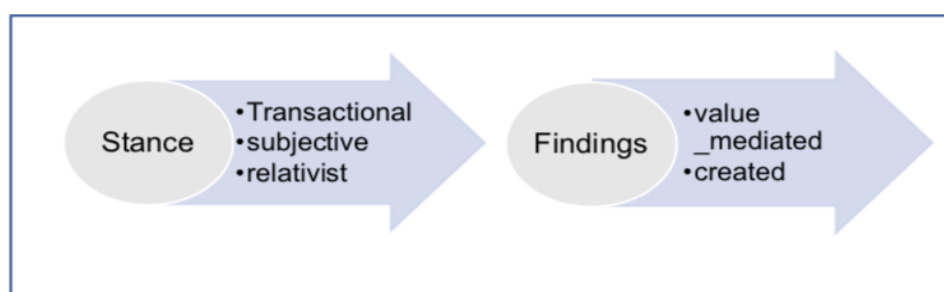


Figure 10. The research constructivism epistemology

Epistemologically, the present research aligns with the assumption that students construct their understanding of the world around them during their active engagement within the cultural environment (Pitts, 2010; Burr, 1995). Also, that knowledge is constructed when both the researcher and the students make sense of the intercultural experiences of students and how it affects their identity development. The epistemological stance that this research adopted allowed me to address the research questions through a realistic, transactional, and subjective approach based on the assumption

that the researcher can construct new knowledge as a result of the ongoing direct interaction with the investigated phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher's constructed knowledge is shaped by lived experiences of both the participants and the researcher (Lincoln et al., 2001). Hence, all the assumptions mentioned, and the epistemological characteristics of the constructivist approach led to the selection of the ethnographic research design and a set of data collection methods which was explored in more details in the following section.

4.3. Ethnographic Case Study Design

The current study sought to provide a rich descriptive account about the students' intercultural experience and how it affected their intercultural identity. For that reason, it employed an ethnographic case study design as an empirical inquiry about the complex, contemporary phenomenon in its natural context with the use of a multitude of methods (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995; Gillam, 2001). In line with the principles of interpretive ethnography, the research sought to describe, interpret, and unfold the meaning of different cultural behaviors (Bernard, 2002).

I followed the definition of Creswell (2003) who argues that an ethnographic case study is a series of prolonged observations within a bounded system of a fixed studied phenomenon, pertaining to a specific group at a specific time, and with the aim to explore the connections between a number of influential factors. The observational method is used to understand another culture, whereas the case study contributes to our understanding of individual, group, organizational, political, and social related phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The present research used an ethnographic case study design with ethnographic being the investigation of; 1) sociocultural context as presented in the natural contextual social system, 2) sociocultural processes as part of the outside in-groups and out-groups interactions, 3) and the cultural meaning that participants give to the interactions they take part in and the context in which they are immersed (Whitehead, 2005).

Case study designs are not free of criticism. Case study is criticized on the basis of lack of rigor and little basis for scientific generalizations (Yin, 2003; Gomm et al., 2002). However, Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that case studies can be "working hypotheses" whose appropriateness relies on how similar or different they are from target cases. Stake (1995) ideas imply that the determination of the meaning and relevance of the study are left to the reader *'who uses his own judgments and experiences to enhance his understanding of it and conduct further his own generalizations relying on the information and description provided by the researcher'* (p.85). Hence, generalizations are not an automatic outcome of the case study but are dependent on the reader's judgment and comparison between the description provided by the research and his experience.

Despite the criticism voiced against case study designs, it is worth mentioning that the quality of the case study is measured by its credibility (Neergaard, 2001). The case study joins interpretations and insights from the key informants, researcher, gatekeepers, and the reader to negotiate the understanding and knowledge of something new (Merriam, 1988; St. Pierre, 2000) enabling rich reliable data collection. Moreover, case study credibility is achieved through a careful and effective sampling and can be further heightened by the use of multiple data collection methods. This would enable the researcher to provide rich research description, which allows the reader to look for similarities that would help reaching transferability. Besides transferability and credibility, other evaluation criteria will be discussed later in this chapter.

The present research sought to illuminate the processes that students undergo in negotiating and developing their intercultural understanding to be able to adjust and negotiate their identity and cope with the sociocultural changes they face (Kim, 2017). Using the ethnographic case study design allowed an exploration of different actions, perceptions, events, and feelings of participants over a prolonged period of time in their natural occurring setting. This provided a deep understanding of the participants' intercultural transformations in the process of intercultural adaptation. To gain this rich and deep understanding of the phenomenon,

a total of 19 weeks was spent in the natural setting collecting data for analysis.

4.4. Sampling Strategy

In this research, I take the view of Nunan (1992) that a case study is based on the selection of a particular class of objects or a specific phenomenon and investigates the way it functions within a specific setting. The instance selected for this study is a group of Algerian students taking part in a pre-sessional program in a university in the UK. It was investigated as an ethnographic case study of study abroad intercultural immersion experience and the development of students' intercultural identity in their process of adapting to the new sociocultural milieu. The study followed a purposeful sampling method.

In keeping with the conventions of qualitative inquiry, I focused on the in-depth study of a relatively small sample. According to Patton (1990), the *'logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich-cases for study in-depth. These cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research'* (p. 169). Students were selected according to the aim of the research: exploring intercultural identity development. Sample criteria were made prior the beginning of the data collection according to a preconceived yet reasonable and well thought set of criteria. I selected a sample **where** the phenomenon of study could be well observed, and its development clearly marked.

The purposeful sampling followed in this research involved identifying and selecting individuals who were especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). Besides knowledge and experience, purposeful sampling also involved willingness to participate, voice opinions and perceptions, and communicate feelings and ideas. The sampling design was chosen to in order to provide rich description of the students' experiences related to

their intercultural experience in England as an unfamiliar or alien country. Other sampling techniques would support more general data rather than specific in-depth information (Streubert, Speziale & Carpenter, 2003).

The recruitment of participants was driven by the criteria for inclusion (Burn & Grove, 2003). The criteria included: Algerian laureates, travelling for the first time, coming from small cities, having had little exposure to cultural diversity (restricted to media). The study's sample consists of 8 Algerian students who passed the national contest for the first classified students to obtain a PhD governmental scholarship to study in the UK. The students all took part in six months pre-session programme in an English university from November to April.

After the formal request made for students regarding their willingness to take part in the research (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979), 15 students signed the form granting their agreement to be a research participant. The eight students chosen lived in the same accommodation where the researcher was also lodged. The sampling aimed at a maximum variation in order to cover the existing range of perspectives relating to intercultural immersion, intercultural understanding, intercultural adaptability, and identity development. Maximum variation sampling (Sandelowski, 1995) ensures the existence of variation among the participants, which may result in rich comprehensive descriptive accounts later (Creswell, 2002). Variations include gender and physical appearance (Veiled/Non-veiled).

It is worth clarifying the 'veil' terminology so as the reader will have a better understanding of the exact appearance of the students who were involved in the case study and who wore the veil. In general, in this research, the term 'veil' is used to refer to modesty-preserving Muslim style-of clothing that covers the head and the body. There are several terms that describe the type of clothing that Muslim women wear to cover themselves. For example, 'Niqab' refers to the loose-fitting garment covering all of the face apart from the eyes. Another form, 'Burka' resembles the 'Niqab', but it is different in the way that it covers the entire

body including the face. The ‘Burka’ has a small opening covered with mesh fabric for the woman to see out of. In the case study, two students were veiled. Specifically, one of them wore the ‘Jilbab’, which is a loose-fitting garment covering the whole body and the head but not the face, – while the other wore the ‘Hijab’, which is a general term meaning ‘cover’ and is most commonly used to refer to the headscarf covering the head and the neck. ‘Hijab’ does not entail a long baggy overgarment but modern modest clothing such as wide/loose-fit dresses or long loose skirts and jackets.

The discussion of the findings will later reveal whether variations influence the students’ adaptability to the new cultural environment and the development of their intercultural identity.

4.5. The Research Context

In the following section, I will provide an overview of the type of study programme students were enrolled in and their main funding body. I will go through the criteria upon which the students’ selection was based on the national level. I will also mention the obligations that the students needed to meet by the end of their studies and the expectations of their funding body. This section will then go through an overview of the participants cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

4.5.1. The Algerian Doctoral Initiative

In an attempt to ameliorate the quality of higher education and supervision, the British Embassy and Algerian Ministry of Higher Education aim to reinforce their cooperation through granting Algerian postgraduate students scholarships to pursue their doctorates in the universities of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. In January 2014, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and the UK government agreed to send 500 Algerian Government funded student majoring English to UK universities over the next five years to pursue their doctoral studies (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2014).

According to the Algerian-UK agreement (2014), the students' selection is done on a basis of merit. The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education is tasked with preparing a national contest in March of every academic year where the first 100 successful candidates are taken (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014). In order to sit for the contest, candidates must fulfil a set of criteria put by the Ministry of Higher Education. The table below (table 9, p.118) summarizes the selection criteria.

Criterion	Definition
Academic discipline	-Students must be enrolled in the English studies discipline. Two academic subject areas exist at the Algerian universities' departments of English: Language Sciences (often referred to as linguistics), and Literature and Civilization Studies.
Age	-Students must be 25 or under by the time they sit for the national contest.
The academic study system	-Students must be enrolled within the LMD new system: The LMD system stands for <i>Licence</i> (3 years), <i>Master</i> (2 years), and <i>Doctorat</i> (3 years). The system's application in universities started in 2010 after the end of the Classical study system.
Academic records	-Students must: -Have excellent academic records during the 5 years of their study. -Be the top of their classes (the first six classified students in each university's English department who meet all the other criteria are taken) - Have never taken a re-sit exam and have never had a mark that is below average in any of the academic subjects.

Table 9. The selection criteria of candidates sitting for the national PhD contest (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education, 2014)

After the selection of the first successful 100 students on the national level, the Ministry of Higher Education, in collaboration with the British Council in Algeria, organizes a one-week program for selected students to introduce them to the process of applying to British universities. This programme also gives the PhD laureates an overview of the IELTS exam, PhD proposal writing, and the procedures they follow to apply to British universities.

An academic and cultural exposure is essential for sojourners to adapt to the host culture through constructing a rich intercultural knowledge (Gamble et al., 2007). As students were little to unprepared for intercultural exposure and had no savoir-faire in a culturally diverse environment, they

opted for the suggestion made by government officials to do a pre-session programme in the UK before starting their PhD. For students, doing a pre-session programme with all the other students was a safe choice in a country of unfamiliarity. The discussion of the findings will later display the purpose of the students' decision to take part in a pre-session programme and their expectations from it.

The contract between the one specific UK University and the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education states that the pre-session programme is tasked with guiding students through the PhD proposal writing, applying to universities in the UK, and preparing and sitting for the IELTS exam. Students who opted to do the course spent 6 months in the selected university where they received intensive academic courses about academic writing, and the four skills they were tested in when they sat for the International English Language Testing systems (IELTS) examination (Memorandum of Understanding, 2016-2019).

As for students, they are required to provide the Ministry and the Algerian Consulate in London with an annual progress report stating their work progress, which has to be validated by their supervisors and stamped by their educational institution. Laureates are also required to be present at the Ministry of Higher Education by August of every year to present their research progress to a scientific panel of researchers for their annual bursary renewal. As part of their signed contract, students are obliged to come back to Algeria to work in Algerian universities within three months after their graduation from their universities in the United Kingdom. If a student does not join his job during the specified period, he would be subject to judicial sanctions (Bursary Sponsorship Contract, 2015).

4.5.2. Algerian Students' Mobility

The Liaison Group for International Educational Exchange (1990) noted that the increasing number of students with the first-hand knowledge of other diverse cultures is one of the best sources for any nation to face international challenges. In the same vein, Gurin et al., (1999), in their evaluative research on a programme facilitating intercultural relation in a university setting, found that students who take part in a program within a culturally different setting are more willing to engage in cross cultural events, develop a curiosity towards cultural diversity and sensitivity to differences.

The positive impact associated with study abroad programs pushes higher education institutions and policy makers to continue to invest in internationalizing students through study abroad programmes. Algeria, likewise, started to make efforts to develop global citizens. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014), 50000 Algerian students are studying abroad, out of which 23000 are studying in France (French Embassy in Algeria, 2015) compared to only 233 in the United Kingdom (UNESCO, 2014). Such statistical differences are a result of political co-operations having almost 800 conventions linking universities from the two Mediterranean edges, and a wide range of research collaborations and programmes. Also, when having the freedom of choice, Algerian students tend to favour France due to its sociocultural familiarity and their fluency in French.

As the first major step for Algerian-British higher education collaboration, the two countries signed in 2014 a five-year contract for sending 500 Algerian students to pursue their doctoral studies in the UK universities. The sample taken for this study included eight out of ninety-three students doing a pre-sessional course in a UK university between late October 2016 to early April 2017. This study explored the intercultural student experience outside their academic context. During my inquiry, I observed how students constructed their intercultural knowledge, their

intercultural encounters, their intercultural experience, and how their immersion helped them develop as intercultural beings.

The academic context is excluded from this study's investigation as I observed that there was no cultural exposure, diversity, or intercultural training and orientation within the classes. Algerian Students were divided into six study groups and each instructor was responsible for a single group of up to sixteen students. The content of the courses was purely academic revolving around IELTS preparation for the initial 3 months (prior to sitting for the exam) and writing and speaking skills for the remaining 3 months. Students had course dealing with culture in the curriculum. However, the course only taught academic research theories and provided no added value to the students' intercultural knowledge about the host cultural site. Overall, students were placed in mono-cultural classes with a British teacher tasked only to deliver academic information.

4.5.3. Participants' Backgrounds

As this study aims to explore the development of students' intercultural identity through their study abroad intercultural immersion experience, the case study was relatively bounded right from the beginning of the research. Purposive sampling was used in order to find the suitable cohort. The criteria were important in order to clearly explore the students' intercultural transformation from mono-cultural individuals who have a single cultural frame of interpretation, to intercultural individuals with an interpretation frame characterized by openness to diversity and intercultural sensitivity, and the ability to cope with differences.

My research participants had never taken part in any type of study abroad programme. Students were born and raised in one cultural environment and were exposed to a single sociocultural value system. Students saw that Algeria is culturally rich in itself. However, diversity is restricted to the surface part of the culture including: food and eating habits, arts and folklore, traditional dressing (specified to occasions such as marriages), and historical influences as Algeria was subject to many

conquests over the history including – but not limited to: the Ottoman Empire, the Roman Empire, the Numidian Kingdom, Berber dynasties (e.g., Zirid, Almoravid, Hammadid, Almohad Caliphate, Marinid, Zayyanid, and Hafsid dynasty), Arab invasions, Christian invasion of Spain, and French colonization. Each colonizer left historical traces in different parts of the country (architecture and sites), and influenced the accents taken by the inhabitants of each city. I am stating these historical facts in order to provide a scope of understanding for future students' assertions regarding the cultural diversity and historical richness of Algeria.

The Participants all identified themselves culturally as being Arab Berbers. Arabs with regard to the culture they were brought in, the language, and value system, and Berber as referring to the original first inhabitants of Algeria. It is worth mentioning that there are Berber minority communities in Algeria speaking the Berber dialects which have been standardized and used officially as a second national language by the Algerian government in 2016 (Article 4 of the Algerian Constitution, 2016). Among 8 participants in this research, only one participant is a Berber speaker, all of them are speakers of Arabic as a mother tongue, well versed in French (first alien language), and fluent in English as they all are students of English majors. All participants are from Algerian parents and grew up under the influence of a single culture. Students reported that they had no connections from outside the country of origin and are only familiar with the cultural image of other counties displayed by the media or narrated in books. The following table illustrates more detailed information regarding the age, gender, origins, physical appearance, travel experience, and spoken languages of each research participant.

Research Participant	Participants' Background
Student 1: Omar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male student aged 25 at the time of the research data collection. - Self-identified as Arab Muslim - From a small city in the North East of Algeria - No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. - Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (Fluent), and French (intermediate)
Student 2: Wassim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male student aged 24 at the time of the research data collection - Self-identified as Arab Muslim - From a small town in the North West of Algeria -No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. - Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (fluent), French (advanced)
Student 3: Ramzi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Male student aged 25 at the time of the research data collection. -Self-identified as Arab Muslim -From a small city in the South Centre of Algeria -No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. -Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (Fluent), French (intermediate)
Student 4: Youcef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Male student aged 24 at the time of the research data collection -Self-identified as Berber Muslim -From a small city in North Centre of Algeria. -No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. -Speaker of Berber (fluent), Arabic (fluent), English (fluent), French (fluent).
Student 5: Amira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female student wearer of the 'Jilbab' aged 25 at the time of the research data collection. -Self-identified as Arab Muslim -From a small city in the Centre East of Algeria

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No previous travel experience outside the city of origin -Speaker of Arabic (fluent), and English (Fluent)
Student 6: Hanan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female student wearer of the 'Hijab' aged 24 at the time of the research data collection. -Self-identified as Arab Muslim -From a small city in the North Centre of Algeria -No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. -Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (Fluent), French (Advanced)
Student 7: Sara		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female non-veiled student aged 24 at the time of the research data collection. -Self-identified as Arab Muslim -From a city in the North Centre of Algeria -No previous travel experiences outside the city of origin. -Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (fluent), French (fluent)
Student 8: Farah		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female non-veiled student aged 25 at the time of the research data collection. -Self-identified as Arab Muslim -From a city in the North East of Algeria -No previous travel experiences outside Algeria. -Speaker of Arabic (fluent), English (fluent), French (fluent).

Table 10: Participants backgrounds

4.6. Methods of Data Collection

This section will tackle the methods of data collection and the logic behind using each method. Green, Camilli, and Elmore (2012) present the common sources of evidence in doing qualitative case study as being: documents (emails, reports, articles, and journals), archival records, interviews, classroom observation, participant observation, and physical artefacts. In this research, data were collected using combined methods in an attempt to better understand the phenomenon being explored (Glesne, 1999). The use of mixed methods is also done to triangulate the data and ensure reliability. The data collection methods used are: ethnographic participant observation integrated with in depth ethnographic interviews, and semi-structured interviews.

4.6.1. Ethnographic Observation

The fieldwork is an important part of the constructionist interpretivist qualitative research methodology, because it is a means by which the researcher can observe, record, and interpret actions and meanings taking place in the immediate natural setting. In all the contexts of the SAP that participants took part in, I was a participant observer, in that I attended classes, activities, and lived in the same students' accommodation.

Ethnographic participant observation is a qualitative research method which enabled me to develop an indigenous sense of the context studied. Participant observation was a systematic description of events, behaviors, and artefacts in the setting chosen for my study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p.79). It was a process of establishing ties with the context and the sample and being able to blend into it, then step out of it and immerse myself in the data to understand what was going on and be able to richly describe it (Bernard, 1994).

The extent of my participation varied according to the setting (Bodgin & Biklin, 2003) and interest in the quality of data needed for this research. For example, during my initial observation of the classes, I sat quietly

among students in the back to observe the class dynamics and the presence of intercultural contact and diversity. The observation as well as follow up interviews confirmed that the classroom setting was culturally poor and offered no insightful data. My participation outside the classroom setting was very engaged and active. I interacted with students, took part in the same activities, and tried to live the same experiences. Students were patient and expressive of their emotions and feelings and took time to explain what seemed normal or strange to them.

I recorded and wrote up field notes in an attempt to cover all the details that would help in answering my research questions. As I was interested in learning about the experiences of students, their perceptions, and frames of understanding what is culturally unfamiliar for them, I tried to become a member of their world, and experience events and meaning in ways that they experienced them. Hence, my fieldnotes were written accounts describing the experiences and observations made while participating in an involved and intense manner. The fieldnotes aimed at capturing the insights of understanding simulated by close and intense experiences.

Participant observation has been criticized for time consumption, hardship of data recording, and lack of objectivity as the researcher is not an independent researcher but a participant observer of the phenomenon that is the subject of the study (Johnson & Sackett, 1998). Another criticism is that the researcher's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) further add that such attributes influence the way the researcher is accepted or rejected in the community he is investigating.

However, I used in this research participant observation as a means of data collection in order to explore verbal and nonverbal communication methods, interactions, and activities to generate rich descriptive data (Schmuck, 1997). Also, I accompanied my observation with other methods of data collection in order to increase the research validity, have a better

understanding of the context and phenomenon studied, and reduce the incidence of reactivity or people behaving differently when feeling observed (Bernard, 1994). Being a participant observer meant being committed to a long period of engagement in the setting and establishing a relation of trust and rapport with the participants (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). This method allowed me to gain deep insights into the students' experiences. Simpson (2000) asserts that an observer must only observe and remain as objective as possible while collecting data (p.105). Nonetheless, keeping a distance between me and my participants would have kept me from living and feelings their stories and experiences, keeping me from being fully engaged in my research (Thorpe, 2001). I was fully engaged with my research with a full awareness of my position vis-à-vis my research findings.

4.6.2. Interviews

Qualitative interviewing has become a prominent method in social sciences (Seale, 1998; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I used interviews as a method as they allowed the collection of rich and in-depth information about students' experiences that helped me explore the texture of their everyday life, understand the experiences of the participants, how social and cultural relationships worked and the meaning they generated from their experiences (Mason, 2002). The interview is a flexible method of research which is sensitive to contextual variation (Sideman, 2013) with the purpose of gathering "*descriptions of the live-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena*" (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). This research made use of semi-structured interviews and qualitative interview. I want to highlight that the semi structured interview questions will be in the appendices of the present research. However, answers are not written so as to respect the participants' confidentiality and keep their identities anonymous (presenting a linear and continuous answers to the interview questions will unveil the participants' identities).

4.6.2.1. Semi Structured Interviews

I took the view – as stated in much of the research methods literature (e.g. Barriball & While, 1993) – that semi structured interviews are a good means for exploring participants' opinions regarding complex situations and issues and probing for more information and clarifications. The interview is a managed verbal interaction (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) and its effectiveness depends on the interviewer's ability to structure the questions (Cohen et al., 2007), listen attentively (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007), and encourage the respondent to talk through facilitating the exchange (ibid). Semi structured interviews designed in this research aimed to elicit the students' ideas and opinions about the topics of interest. The in-depth interviews in the present study lasted between 40 minutes to one hour, and revolved around the students' intercultural experiences, emotions, and perceptions. The interviews provided basis to understand how students felt about their intercultural experiences and the meaning they attached to what was happening around them in the new cultural environment (Patton, 1990). Before being interviewed, each participant reviewed and signed a consent form in which they had and summary of the conducted research, a declaration that the interviews will be audio taped, and an explanation of confidentiality. A copy of the signed consent form of each interviewee was kept for my records.

Face to face interviews were conducted because I was keen to gain deep and meaningful insights on the participants' way of making sense of the world around them (Gillham, 2000). The interviews' purpose was to use a discussion in order to get information about the main themes this research investigates (intercultural adaptability, intercultural immersion process, preparedness, and identity development). The first meeting with students was arranged by a university staff member who taught them one of the programme subjects. A formal introduction and overview of the research was done at the end of their class at university, prior to the interviews taking place. I was overwhelmed by the students' collaboration and willingness to engage in the research and provide their emails and phone numbers to be easily reached.

The interview questions were generated based on the literature about the influence of intercultural exposure on the study abroad experience, intercultural adaptability and intercultural transformation. The initial observation data were also used to shape some of the questions participants were asked in order to add clarification to the phenomenon investigated such as questions regarding the ways in which they accumulate intercultural knowledge, their perceptions, and their intercultural readiness. The setting and environment of the interviews were chosen by the interviewees to ensure an atmosphere where they felt comfortable. The participants were very easy to approach and very responsive and willing to 'help'. Each interview generated up to 30 pages of transcription. However, students often wanted to talk more about their experience and felt excited to share all sorts of experiences and ask me other questions about academia, university application procedures, and my previous experience about the process of joining the University of Bath. These conversations took place after the end of the interview when all the recording devices were off, and sometimes on the walk back to the students' accommodation. It is worth mentioning that a rich amount of data was yielded by the question: *'Is there anything you want to tell me about your experience so far?'* It seemed that students were willing to share experiences that I did not know were important to them.

The interviews were audio taped on two different devices so as to have backup versions: the phone, and the laptop. The audio recordings were then transferred to a portable hard drive. The consent forms, the interviews' transcriptions, and the hard drive were stored in a safe place. Interviewees were given the freedom not to answer any question or withdraw if they felt uncomfortable (though none did). Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the period of the students' programme to account for their intercultural transformation and the process of their intercultural adaptability. Figure 11 below is a timeline explaining the followed procedure followed to conduct interviews.

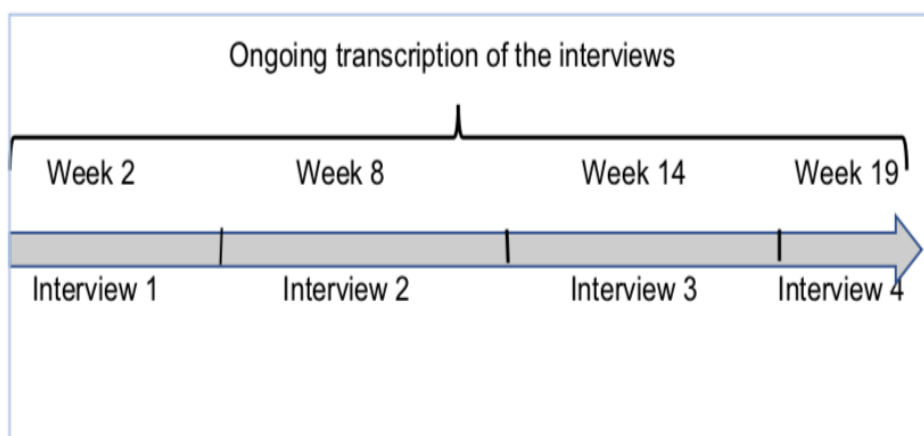


Figure 11. The timeline of semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted over the period of 19 weeks (one round (R) of interviews every 5/6 weeks) in order to explore whether there was a change in the students' perceptions, attitudes, judgments, and views of themselves and others, and how they reflected it and expressed it during the interview.

It is true that this method of data collection is subject to some criticism. Interviews are said to be time consuming and have room for bias (Silverman, 1998). Moreover, it has been claimed that interviews are used for narrowly defined purposes and yield assumptions about the real world (Seal, 1998). Also, Beaker & Geer (1957) argue that during an interview the respondents do not necessarily say what they do. Thus, the researcher cannot claim that data generated by an individual is truer or more correct than the other. Hence, in order to overcome such limitations voiced against scheduled standardized interviews where there is no follow up from the researcher, interviews were conducted at several intervals of time and the period between one interview and another was used for transcriptions. Interviews were an open space for students to talk about their experiences comfortably and openly in the language they opted for (Arabic, English, or French). The set of questions asked were to orient the discussion towards answering the research questions. Also, member checks with the participants were used in order to ensure the validity of the data.

4.6.2.2. Ethnographic Interviews

In this research, ethnographic interviews were means by which data was generated through a normal flow of discussion between the interviewee and interviewer. I used ethnographic interviews as they are an ongoing respectful relationship between the interviewee and interviewer characterized by '*genuine exchange of views*' (Heyl 2001, p. 369). Ethnographic interviews allowed me to explore the topic being studied in a way that yield rich data about how students perceive differences, similarities, interactions (Ortiz, 2003) in a natural environment where no device was being held, making students act more at ease and comfort.

Ethnographic interviews accompanied the immersive participant observation in order to learn more about the students' behaviors, expressions, and views from the students themselves, in their own words, in a natural setting at the spur of the moment. As I was living with students and sharing their daily living and activities, I established a very good rapport with the participants. Students saw me as one of them and reported at the end of the research that they forgot that I was a researcher and lived with the idea that I was one of them. This was probably due to the characteristics I share with the students which will be mentioned later in this chapter in my discussion of reflexivity. The amount of time spent, and the type of relationship built with my participants allowed me to have a lot of opportunities to ask questions that captured certain feelings, statements, and actions that were relevant to my research.

During the time spent with my participants, and in order to establish a comfortable atmosphere, I did not take notes of the ethnographic interviews or observation in front of them (Bogdin & Biklin, 2003). Instead, I made mental notes about what to include in my notes and took advantage of the pauses to leave for short time and write down or record my observations, and report what was said by the student (s) on my phone and a small notebook that I kept on me all the time.

The data generated by the ethnographic interviews helped in crafting rich diverse descriptions and understanding of the daily experiences of students. Interviews allowed the exploring of the impact of intercultural immersion on participants' cultural knowledge construction, altering of behaviors and perceptions, and their own frames from which they explained the diversities around them. It also provided data about the difficulties that students encountered and the coping mechanisms they used to overcome them. The use of research ethnographic interviews yielded rich information about the sociocultural life and personal and interior experiences of students and how they affected the way participants acted, thought, and felt. The following table provides more details about the timeline of the data collection so as to have a visual presentation of the time during which interviews were conducted and observations taken.

Semi structured Interviews	Ethnographic interviews	Participant observations
Round 1: From 21/11/2016 to 23/12/2016 Round 2: From 23/12/2016 to 3/2/1017 Round 3: From 3/2/2017 to 10/3/2017 Round 4: From 10/3/2017 to 5/4/2017	- From 18/11/2016 to 5/4/1027. - Interviews were not scheduled. - Ethnographic interviews were used on the spur of the moment to collect data about specific feelings, perceptions, and experiences.	- From 18/11/2016 to 5/4/2017 - Observations were taken along the whole time of the data collection process. - Participant observations were not bounded by a specific time and space.

Table 11: Timeline of the data collection

4.7. Data Analysis

Like other research within the qualitative-interpretive tradition, my research inquiry aimed to generate knowledge grounded in the human experience (Sandelowski, 2004). As qualitative research is increasingly becoming recognized and valued, it is important to conduct it in a rigorous way to generate meaningful and reliable data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Data analysis and interpretation is an ongoing process of creating and solving a puzzle (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). The researcher starts by creating a range of pieces that may fit into a larger puzzle and tries throughout the research inquiry to put the pieces together to create a clear picture.

Researchers state that data analysis is considered as a mysterious part of the qualitative research inquiry process (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor in Ritchie & Lewis (Eds), 2003). Today, researchers offer a wide range of ways and processes to follow when analysing the data. It is recognized that a clear guidance is needed regarding the practical aspects of doing qualitative analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Some qualitative researchers focus on particular methods of data analysis. For example, Wolcott (1994) points to three different way of transforming the research data: 1/ description which covers the explanation of the phenomenon observed, 2/ analysis which aims to say how things work, and 3/ the interpretation which examines the usefulness of the described and analysed data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) offer a handbook of strategies for analysing qualitative data. In their handbook, detailed process of data analysis methods is explained, such as data coding and the illustration of analytical strategy of narrative analysis. Holloway and Todres (2003) identify the method of '*thematizing the meaning*' (p.347) across qualitative analysis. Similarly, Ryan and Bernard (2000) claim that thematic coding is a process of analysis performed within major analytic traditions rather than a specific approach on its own.

In this research, I analysed the data thematically following the definition of Clarke and Braun stating that thematic analysis is a method for *'identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data. It minimally organizes and describe your data set in (rich) detail'* (2006, p.6). They further explain that thematic analysis is a data analysis method that is independent from theory and can be applied across a wide range of theoretical and epistemological approaches making flexibility as one of its prominent advantages (ibid). Hence, the thematic analysis' theoretical freedom made it a flexible and useful research instrument that I used to generate a rich and detailed account of data (King, 2004). Thematic analysis enabled the summarizing of key elements of a large data set as it led me to follow a well-structured approach of handling the data, helping me to generate a clear and organized final research structure and report (ibid).

I used thematic analysis because it enabled me to examine, from a constructionist methodological position, the meaning that students attached to their intercultural immersion experience, the significance it had on their lives, and on a larger scale, their social constructions of it (Evans, 2018). Thematic analysis was used as this research aims to explore the students' intercultural knowledge construction, the influence of their experience on their intercultural transformation and adaptability and examine the influence of the host cultural environment diversity in allowing them opportunities of civic participation and intercultural encounters. Thematic analysis was used in order to understand how students made meaning of their experiences, how their knowledge helped them in their new social worlds, and how their intercultural identity and adaptability process were informed by their intercultural experiences within the new host environment.

The qualitative thematic analysis used in this research required the transcription of interviews and some recorded observations. Thematic analysis can be done through utilizing programming for preparing and instructing the data such as the NVivo software, which helps in gathering evidence and grouping it into similar ideas and themes (Alhojailan, 2012).

I preferred to use the traditional manual method. I used data display techniques (written transcripts, use of post-its, use of posters) as it made the description of the comparison and similarities clearer. After transcribing all the data gathered, I started the process of analysis through familiarizing myself with the research evidence. This step revolved around reading the data several times to become immersed and familiar with its content. At this point I have made notes and written down the first impressions. It is worth mentioning that the first part of the data gathered (first round of interviews) was transcribed and reflected upon during the process of the data collection whenever time allowed it.

After familiarizing myself with the data, I engaged in the process of coding. The main purpose of coding was to make connections between different parts of the data. It involved generating succinct labels (codes) that identified important features of data or what the data is trying to report (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). After coding the data, I started generating the initial themes. This phase involved examining the codes and the collated data to generate a broader pattern of meaning or a theme. In order to refine the categories of meanings in the data, I have followed Wellington's (2000) method of the refinement of categories summarized in the table below.

Step 1	Data divided into units of meaning
Step 2	Units grouped/classified
Step 3	Search for similar categories (looking for merging possibilities)
Step 4	Examine amorphous categories (could one be divided to two)
Step 5	Checking: a/ do the categories cover all the data? b/ Are they different or rather overlapping?
Step 6	Looking for connections, contrast, and comparison between categories.

Table 12. Constant comparative method and continuous method:
Refinement of categories (Wellington, 2000: 137)

Table 12 served as a guideline to analyse the data gathered through interviews, and participant observation. What participants reported about their experiences, their perceptions, and feelings were all analysed thoroughly. The analysis consisted of a system of recording each student's responses, and researcher's observations. The data was read several times leading to the identification of the relevance of the data to the research questions. The words, expressions, and sentences were coded into multiple themes and categories. Data were also analyzed following an inductive process which shed the light on patterns generated by the students' intercultural experiences and understanding throughout their immersion in the host environment, and the behavioral changes it entailed. The main aim of the analysis was not to account for the development of each student's intercultural identity, but to explore how students' intercultural transformation is supported by the conceptual framework of the present study.

The refinement of the data categories resulted in themes that delivered specific insights about the research questions. Following Wellington (2000) model of the refinement of categories allowed me to explore differences, similarities, and interrelationships through entering the data into conceptual clusters of analysis. At this stage, each theme was supported by the data with which it was associated. After identifying the '*essence of what each theme is about*' (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92) a data display was drawn (figure 12, p.143) to illustrate conceptual coherence through collating the themes that related to each research questions. The final stage of the data analysis revolved around weaving together the analysed responses, expressions, experiences, and data extracts, and contextualising the analysis in relation to the conceptual framework and literature. The data transcription and analysis took 8 months.

This study involved an interrelation between the data collection and analysis (Erlandson, 1993). This interactive process took place as I was transcribing and reviewing the data in parallel with collecting it during my

ethnographic ongoing observation. Accordingly, some small adjustments in the interview questions were added as new information emerged.

A constant comparative method was used during the data analysis comparing between the similarities and the differences between the categories derived from the data collected at different intervals of time until distinct patterns were evident (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Data analysis was guided by a transformative way of reflection (Curry & Wells, 2004). Throughout the data analysis I have been guided by asking the questions: how does the explored phenomenon relate to the participants' experience; what kind of transformation did the participants experience; and how did the experience change the way the students interacted with the world around them? (ibid, p.81). In order to build a coherent and strong justification for my categories and themes triangulation of data sources was used (Creswell, 2003).

Case studies aim mainly at putting forward a framework for discussion of a particular phenomenon, and at trying to educate and inform the reader about a process, they are not necessarily a replication of experiences and events but more of an interpretation (Yin, 1994). In this research, data were not presented in a numerical statistical way, rather, descriptive techniques were used in the analysis, and later in telling the researcher's findings (Merriam, 1998). In order to report the data in a clear manner worthy of the reader's attention, the term triangulation was used referring to a fundamental qualitative research strategy ensuring the research scientific trustworthiness.

4.8. Researcher Reflexivity and Positioning

Qualitative research follows a methodological tradition of inquiry to explore social and human issues and develop explanations for the studied phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is a research with a driving focus on how people perceive and live experiences as they are. Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning in context, and acknowledges a subjective element is the research process where the researcher shapes and

is shaped by his background and the situation and context of the study. This element of reflexivity in research has its core focus on the researcher's explicit self-aware data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002).

In my study I followed the definition of reflexivity as being a process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's position towards their research investigation, his/her active acknowledgement and awareness that his/her position may affect the research outcomes later (Stromack et al., 2007; Pillow, 2003). In this research, reflexivity helped to identify the potential effect of personal, contextual, or circumstantial aspects on the research. It also assisted me in knowing the issues to focus on during the data collection phase, and pushed me to reflect upon the experiences and become sufficiently aware of my reactions to different answers, thoughts, and emotions.

I saw reflexivity as a dynamic interaction between action and research. The researcher worldview and background may influence the way he asks questions, interacts with participants, and the sense she\he uses to perceive and reflect upon the participants experiences. I am fully aware that sharing a large number of similarities with students such as the cultural background, nationality, and even the fact of benefiting from the same scholarship could made me bring my own '*frames of interpretation*' (Erikson, 1986, p.140). Based on my professional and academic experience, it was clear that conducting the research in an objective manner would not have been possible. Hence, along the work on my investigation, a reflective diary (Bogdin & Biklin, 2003) was kept separate from my field notes. This activity helped me to become aware of the frames of interpretation of my participants' and my own frame of interpretation brought to the study site (Erickson, 1986). My research reflexivity was a means of rendering the tension between my involvement and detachment and thus enhancing '*the credibility of the findings by accounting for research values, beliefs, knowledge, and biases*' (Sutcliffe, 2003, p. 137).

Lincoln's (1995) idea of the reciprocity between the researcher and his/her participants is essential due to the '*person-centered nature of interpretive work, and the kind of intense sharing*' which characterize our relationships with a '*deep sense of trust, caring, and mutuality*' (p.283). This reciprocal relationship was established with my participants as I was living with them and accompanying them in their activities on a daily basis, and was strengthened by the shared cultural and national affiliations. This allowed me to be the key informant of my research (Hebert & Beardsley, 2002), and a peripheral member of the Algerian laureates' community at the onset of this study. Another advantage that helped in affectively conducting my research is what Anderson refers to as '*sympathetic resonance*' (1998, p.78) which led me to apprehend and recognize the experiences of the students and their expressed feelings and positions. My empathetic nature connected me to my participants' responses and stories.

Through my research investigation, I came to understand that my data is influenced by the students' experiences and their ability to express the quality and accuracy of those intercultural experiences. However, my prolonged investigation of the students' immersion and cultural transformation over time and my persistent observation in the natural setting of the studied phenomenon generated enough concurring data along with rich descriptions to bring credibility to this research (Erlandson et al., 1993). Students gave me full access to their physical and psychological spaces unconditionally and willingly for which I will always be grateful. Throughout the research, I was aware of my relationship with students and its relationship with my research interpretation and position and was reflected upon constantly.

4.9. The Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

I take the view that research trustworthiness represents the quality of the qualitative enquiry (Schwandt, 1997). To assure the rigor of the qualitative research, a set of evaluative criteria has been put in place. These criteria include dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Threats to the research validity and trustworthiness affect the findings of the undertaken research. For this reason, it was important to try to limit the threats to ensure the quality and goodness of the present research.

As reflected in the literature (e.g. Leung, 2015), I take the view that research validity and trustworthiness refers to the appropriateness of the research tools, processes, and the data. It revolves around the adequacy of the research design for answering the inquiry's questions, the appropriateness of the sampling and data analysis, and the validity of the results and the conclusions vis-à-vis the sample and the context. Validity indicates consistency regarding the activities and events associated with the phenomenon as signified by the study results explored in the research (Golafshani, 2003). It helps in increasing transparency and decreasing from the chance of research bias in the qualitative research (Singh, 2014).

Although some qualitative researchers argue that the criterium of validity is not applicable in qualitative research inquiries, they point to the fact that the need for qualifying check is needed for the research. For example, Creswell & Miller (2000) claim that validity is related to the way the researcher perceives it and his/her choice of the research paradigm. Hence, researchers adopted several concepts that are considered as appropriate terms such as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davis & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following section deals with the way in which this research tried to ensure the trustworthiness criteria.

4.9.1. Credibility

In this research, I followed the definition of credibility as being the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings (Macnee & MacCabe, 2008). It determines whether the research findings represent plausible information derived from the interpretation of data provided by the participants' experiences and views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With an extended immersion within the field of research, there was an important concern about my interpretations of the research data (Silverman, 2000). Hence, it was important to identify effective ways of dealing with the results as credibility represented an important part of my research.

In order to ensure the credibility of the qualitative research, member checks should be conducted by initiating and maintaining an active collaboration for the data interpretation between the participants and the researcher (Angers & Machtmes, 2005). In this research, each participant was granted the chance to read, correct, and comment on the transcribed data and written descriptions. Participants were also given the choice to read field notes if curious. Triangulation of research methods for data collections was used to establish the credibility and validity of the conducted research, and ensure that the findings did not result from a single method, source, or the researcher's bias (Patton, 1990). Credibility was also reflected in the prolonged participant observation and engagement in the fieldwork.

4.9.2. Transferability

Following Guba & Lincoln (1989) description, I take that transferability refers to the generalization of research findings which can be applicable to different contexts. Hence, the degree to which the findings can be applicable to other contexts with other participants. The transferability is facilitated by the researcher through providing the reader with a rich description and purposeful sampling (Bitsch 2005: 85). This means that through the descriptive accounts of the inquiry and the sample, the transferability task is easier for the reader who is left with the final judgment after making a comparison between the research data and his own experience. In case study research, each case is unique in its detailed description of context, situation, actors, and different reactions to events, interactions, or interpersonal behavior interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Generalization of the findings to a larger population was not possible in this research because the participants were not randomly sampled. Moreover, this study is exploratory and ethnographic which makes from the case study specific in time and place, therefore more research need to be conducted so as to be able to generalize on a wider sample. Hence, making law like generalizations was not the primary goal of this research. Transferability could be theoretically possible depending on the similarities that the present case study shares with the others.

The information and description of the case and context provided in this study will help the reader to identify similarities between the cases presented and the degree to which the finding might be transferable to other groups (Schwandt, 1997). Therefore, the determination of the relevance of this case study research and its meaning are left to the reader who will use his judgment and experiences to foster his understanding of the research and draw his own generalizations through relying on the description and data interpretation provided (Steak, 1995).

4.9.3. Dependability

In this research, I take the view that dependability revolves around the stability of the data over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It involves participants' evaluation of the data interpretation and results generated from the participants of the research (Cohen et al., 2011) to make sure that findings are supported by the data generated from the participants. Dependability is focused on the researcher's ability to ensure that the process of inquiry was logical, well documented, and traceable. Auditing, an approach based on describing how the data was collected and analyzed and how the study was conducted, was the procedure followed in this research to ensure the dependability of the researchers' conclusions (Schawandt, 1997).

Dependability was assured in this research through a careful examination of the inquiry process and detailed description of data collection and interpretation methods by the supervisors. Also, judging the dependability of a study requires a careful observation of the informants over an extended period of time so as to see and explore the changes and understand them (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). This study closely examined the development of students' intercultural identity through the duration of their program and reported and described all the changes that occurred.

4.9.4. Confirmability

In this research, I adopt the view that confirmability is a strategy to ensure the neutrality of the data collected in qualitative research (De Vos, 1998:331). Confirmability aims at illustrating that the evidence from one research can generate for another researcher the same data conclusions as in the studied context (Streubert, Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). In other words, that findings of one inquiry can be confirmed by other researchers. This research follows the view of Guba and Lincoln (1989) stating that confirmability is the use of persons and contexts as the primary source of data, interpretations, and outcomes.

The present research used mainly raw data collected from interviews' recordings and participant observations and field notes to ensure the research confirmability (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). Also, a careful planning of the research phases of data collection and matching the research conclusions with the data analysis and interpretation were done. Furthermore, as ethnography was my primary method of data collection, it was very important to be aware and reflect on my role as a researcher and interpreter. For that, in order to ensure the clarity of my voice as opposed to the voice of my participants, a reflexive journal was kept, and triangulation was used to strengthen evidence, deeply examine the interpretations and go beyond individual views (Babbie, 1998; Koch, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.10. Research Ethical Considerations

This research is undertaken with the aim to generate knowledge, contribute to the programme design, policy, practice, and most of all help in making the future participants' intercultural experience more fruitful and enjoyable. Ethnography methods, among other qualitative research approaches (e.g. Action research, phenomenology, and biography), can pose complex challenges to an ethical conduct of research (Halai, 2006). Hence, in this section I will clarify the present research ethical considerations.

I implemented the present research in accordance with what Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.39) refer to as '*an ethical mindfulness*'. In doing so, I considered myself as the research instrument and saw my presence in the lives of the participating students as fundamental to the methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.112). During the inquiry, I recognised that my role as participant observer and as researcher served as a filter and influenced the way in which I conducted and interpreted, and how I perceived, documented and thus coded the data (Saldaña, 2009, p.7). For that I kept on constantly reflecting upon my stance and distancing my personal frames of interpretation from the participants' ones.

Concerns about the use of data mostly revolve about the potential harm to the individual subjects and the issue of consent. In the research, I respected the participants' confidentiality and their identities remained anonymous all along the research through the use of coding. Richards and Schwartz (2002) recommend the use of pseudonyms or initials and, where possible, that the researcher change other identifying details in reports. I have used pseudonyms all along the research, and data were appropriately coded and contained no personal identifiers in it. Data recordings were kept in two recording devices and have been kept safe from unauthorized access, accidental loss, or destruction.

I take the view of Bulmer (2008) stating that informed consent in a '*linchpin of ethical behavior*' (p. 150). Recommendations in relation to consent were given by several authors (e.g. Davison, 2004; Ensign, 2003). These recommendations mainly focused on the importance of providing detailed information to participants about the nature of the research and the need to gain written consent. My research participants were given a written consent in which a summary of the research was provided, and information about the research procedures and methods were described. Participants were fully aware of the needs of the research and aims of the interviews and observation. Also, it was emphasised that participation in the research was voluntary and participants were aware that they could opt to withdraw from the research or decide not to answer a specific question if they feel uncomfortable. In some cases, students reported incidents of ill social treatment. When faced with similar claims, I referred student to university staff, showed my understanding and sympathy, and reminded the interviewee of the possibility to abstain from answering any question that might rise a state of stress or discomfort.

The research participants predominantly decided quickly to take part in the study and were very committed to the research. Out of 40 students who expressed interest and willingness to take part of the research, eight were recruited as participants for the study. Participants' feelings about the research and their dedication to help were influenced by their perception

of its importance. Students were very easy to reach as they provided their emails and contact details very openly. Participants showed no aversion to discussing their vulnerability, and stressful experiences provided they felt the study was worthwhile.

4.11. Conclusion of Chapter 4

In this research, the data collected were principally of qualitative nature as the ethnographic case study research in education uses qualitative methods that are descriptive and inferential, which enabled me to understand the case and the context I was investigating (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The use of qualitative research methods is justified by the fact that they provide rich and rigorous description of the case and the natural context of research. Moreover, the use of qualitative research methodology is based on explaining how knowledge is constructed via participants' perspectives and practices (Flick, 2007).

The present research is based on the constructivist paradigm which considers that knowledge is socially constructed through social practices and interactions, developed and transmitted within a social context, and is subject to change according to the social experiences (Crotty, 1998). The choice of the qualitative paradigm was based on the fact that it encouraged me to be engaged in my scientific investigation in order to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon rather than examining the surface features (Johnson, 1995). Because knowledge and perceptions change, multiple methods of data collection were in order in this research. Also, information gathering, and exploration of the studied phenomenon were done during the whole period of the immersion in order to capture the intercultural changes, development of students' identities, and the process of intercultural adaptability. Moreover, participant ethnographic observation gave me the opportunity to capture students' beliefs, perceptions, and the reasons driving their actions, as well as the lens from which they viewed themselves and interpreted what happened around them. Hence, engaging multiple methods in my research data collection

helped in constructing a valid, reliable, and appropriate research inquiry (Johnson, 1997).

The current study aims at investigating the intercultural identity development process that students go through in its natural setting. This research used the ethnographic case study design to explore behavioral patterns and make sense of the cultural context and interactions. The use of ethnography allowed the opportunity to capture students' intercultural experiences while the case study provided the framework specified by the studied phenomenon (Crewel, 2013).

The data analysis was done through collecting themes generated from the students' responses from interviews and the throughout long process of observation. The analysis consisted of a system of recording each student's responses, and researcher's observations. The data was read several times leading to the identification of the relevance of the data to the research questions. The words, expressions, and sentences were coded into multiple themes and categories. Data was also analyzed following an inductive process which shed the light on patterns generated by the students' intercultural experiences and understanding throughout their immersion in the host environment, and the behavioral changes it entailed. The main aim of the analysis was not to account for the development of each student's intercultural identity, but to explore how students' intercultural transformation is supported by the conceptual framework of the present study. The research findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Research Results

5.1. Introduction to Chapter 5

In this chapter, I will present the results from the analysis of the data collected during the six months' experience of Algerian students in the UK. As described in chapter 2, results were obtained by analyzing the data gathered from semi structured and ethnographic interviews as well as observations. In this chapter, I will be using single quotation marks to report students' statements.

The chapter is organized into 4 theme-based sections. It begins with the analysis of responses in order to address Research Question 1 which seeks to explore the key factors that influence intercultural identity development during study abroad programmes. This was followed by the analysis of students' behaviors during their intercultural encounters' experiences and the challenges engendered by a first intercultural exposure experience. These results address the research question 2 which seeks to identify the behaviors and perceptions associated with the development of intercultural identity and gives insights to answer the third research question seeking to investigate ways in which we can facilitate the students' intercultural development through study abroad programmes.

The final theme of this chapter analyses the student's intercultural identity development through some observable changes in their behaviors, perceptions, and identity traits. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results. The following diagram (figure 12, p.150) summarizes the relationship between the themes generated and the research questions.

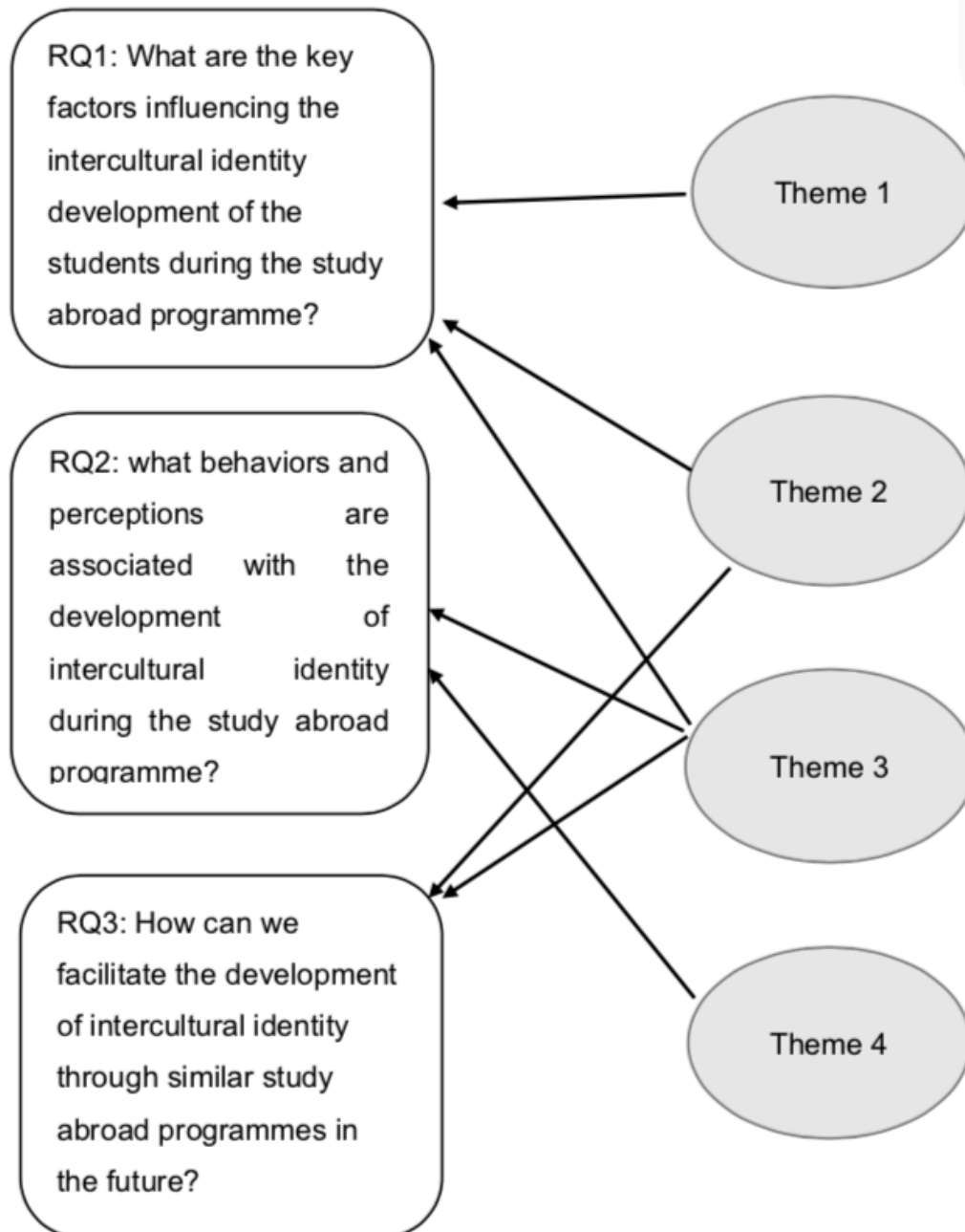


Figure 12. Themes and research questions summarizing diagram

5.2. Theme 1: Intercultural immersion

Data collected for this research reflected that intercultural immersion in a different sociocultural environment represented a hands-on experiential learning process through active engagement within the host culture and its people. Students' intercultural immersion brought an intangible value which came from acclimating in a new place, integrating into the community, interacting with people, and understanding new ways of life. It was important in allowing students to know and understand others through empathic introspection and reflection based on direct contact with the culture and its people.

In this section, I explore the students' intercultural learning through the immersion experience they had during their stay in the UK in an attempt to answer the research question revolving around whether studying abroad helped in the construction of a rich intercultural knowledge and contributed in preparing students to adapt to a new sociocultural way of life. In my analysis I focused on students' interactions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (locals and internationals) and the nature of the contact they engaged in. I also looked into observations students reported about their learning environments and the way they built their social networks in the host environment.

5.2.1. Intercultural Learning

Intercultural immersion experiences enabled students to develop an intercultural knowledge and understanding of the British and other international societies in general. Such understanding was not academically taught but constructed through sociocultural immersion entailing contact with people from different cultural backgrounds and exposure to different values and world-views presented to them in the host culture. Below, I go through the data displaying students' construction of intercultural knowledge through their immersion experience in the host environment.

5.2.1.1 Knowledge Building through Sociocultural Experience

Throughout intercultural contact and exposure, the traditional Algerian way of thinking and functioning was contrasted with the new ways of life students were confronted with. During the first couple of weeks in the UK, students started observing life around them and making sense of what was happening. For example, Omar displayed continuous efforts to understand how the process of socialization and networking was done in the new environment. The process of learning and understanding through his intercultural immersion started by the comparison between his home and host culture. He stated that he was finding difficulties approaching people, which is unlikely to happen in Algeria. He assumed that hardships to connect with British people on a personal level was due to their individualistic and reserved nature. However, Omar displayed willingness to interact more and try to understand the others (SSI 1, R1).

Another student (Ramzi) also expressed his feeling of confusion regarding many facets of the social life, and highlighted some very simplistic ones as he was comparing them to the ones he had been used to back home, he stated:

Ramzi: *'(...) one thing the sense of orientation. I mean I look left then right when I came, I got confused. Also, teachers here are so humble they ask you to call them by their first names. In Algeria if you call your teacher by his first name it is so disrespectful. And yeah you know the society here is so organized that it made me feel like it's an anarchy (laughing)'*

(SSI 3, R1.30/11/2016).

Data excerpts show that students started constructing their knowledge about diversities through engaging in different experiences leading them to learn through comparison. As it is their first intercultural immersion in a different country, students had one reference to compare to, Algeria. This

comparison opened the students' eyes to novelties they never experienced, ranging from the superficial cultural aspects (such as greetings, titles, foods, and clothing) to deeper cultural connotations (such as values, beliefs, and attitudes).

Students' intercultural immersion helped them to acquire an intercultural knowledge which raised intercultural awareness regarding the context, their beliefs and feelings, and their role in the society. This led them to change the way they structured their assumptions and expectations. The example of Youcef helps illustrating the change of perceptions and views. Youcef experienced for the first-time cultural differences outside Algeria. His first confrontation with novelties led to some confusion and discomfort. For example, during a social event, he highlighted the difficulty and confusion he faced trying to understand the fact that socialization in the UK is mostly done around the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Understanding this sociocultural side of the British way of life could have been easier if the student lived in a culturally diverse place or travelled and came across diverse sociocultural ways of life. Since Algeria is an Arab Berber Muslim country, there are no alcoholic beverages served in public places except hotels. This led to the confusion of the student who came from a small city and was faced with little or no cultural diversity in his culture. He stated that he wanted to talk more to people to understand why they consumed alcohol and expressed his discomfort when British and other internationals offered him to drink or go to pubs to socialize as he always regarded that as taboo and religiously forbidden. (Ethnographic Journal, 11/12/2016).

The intercultural confusion faced by Youcef encouraged him to engage more in intercultural encounters and interactions so as to adapt to the new ways of life in the host culture through grasping better diverse cultural norms and connotations. His knowledge building through interaction led to the development of open mindedness and his ability to cope with differences and adjust to the new cultural environment. This development can be displayed in the following interview excerpt as the student talked

about an anecdote which happened by the fourth month into the experience as he was invited to a pub by some friends:

Youcef : ' (...) When they said pub I was thinking music and alcohol and that's not where I want to be, but when he insisted out of politeness I said I will go (...) You know usually the word pub itself alarms me but it was really fine people having good time, chatting, so I really enjoyed it. And I mean drinking or whatever is a personal choice and it's fine everyone can do whatever he wants as long as he doesn't harm his surrounding'
(SSI 4, R3.13/02/2017)

It is noticeable that the student's perception regarding the way of socialization and consumption of beverages changed, and this was clear in his thinking and behavior as the previous data excerpt showed. This is a result of his exposure to a different sociocultural way of life. This change potentially helped Youcef in the development of an intercultural identity which transcended all boundaries of stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings and led to a successful adjustment to the new sociocultural environment.

5.2.1.2. Between Academic and Experiential Learning

Data suggested that experiential learning is structured by students through a process of upon their daily experiences. Students' learning about the culture in its natural setting provided them with opportunities to fully experience social and cultural diversities

Students have learned about the English culture in some of their modules back home. However, once in the actual context they repeatedly expressed that what they have learned or heard was different from what they experienced. For example, during the first weeks Sara expressed that she was astonished by not seeing the cultural aspects and habits she learned about in her academic curriculum. She expressed:

Sarah: ' (...) *I was very keen to explore the English way of life, the English breakfast, the English tea parties but when I came I didn't see what I read about and learned (...) There is nothing special about this here and even when I asked British people last time, the student union director said he doesn't even like tea*' (SSI 7, R1.04/12/2016).

Sara thought that she was prepared to confront diversities, and that she was knowledgeable about different cultural aspects of life in the host environment. However, she came to realize that the depiction of the English way of life in books was different from the real life she was experiencing, as the former was overgeneralized and could date back to old times (classic novels and poetry) reinforcing some stereotypes that could be overcome through experiential learning.

Students reported that learning about the host culture was not done through academic courses. Instead, being immersed within the culture was what helped them understand the others' culture and cultural norms. For example, by the fourth month abroad, Hanan expressed that experiencing the culture is more enriching than just learning about it in books and in classes, she said: ' *You know in Algeria when I learned about the British culture and language it was basically in theoretical terms, but when I got here, I got to experience everything first hand (...)*' (Hanan, SSI6, R3.14/02/2017)

Similarly, Farah expressed once that what they learned back home about the English culture is different compared to what they learned while living in the actual English environment. She added that when she was immersed, she had the chance to live the moment, to explore the culture and the social life, and to build her views on strong understanding and not on weak stereotyping (EI 8, R3.17/02/2017).

The knowledge constructed through immersion and interaction is not only about the specific host culture but also about diverse social groups and the way identities function. Students asserted that academia could not manage to fully provide all the intercultural knowledge they needed to face diversities in the host environment. As a matter of fact, many teachers have never had the chance to be fully immersed in a culture that their students may come across which made it a hard task to deliver an accurate description of the cultural and social norms and habits to students.

5.2.2. Summary of Theme 1

To sum up with, this theme tackled the role of students' intercultural immersion in preparing them to adjust to the new culture by constructing a rich intercultural knowledge. Such knowledge construction was possible through observations, and intercultural encounters during their sojourning experience in the UK. Students continuously reported that experiential learning was rich and enabled them to overcome their stereotypes and understand the culture unlike theoretical learning which was superficial and at times misleading. Findings reflected the important role the immersion experience through the study abroad programme played in the students' intercultural preparedness to live and adjust to the new environment (RQ1), and the effect of their hands-on experience in the UK on changing their perceptions and views to better cope with the host environment demands and way of life (RQ 2).

5.3. Theme 2: Sociocultural Challenges

Data suggested that sociocultural adaptation to a new and unfamiliar environment entailed a lot of challenges which could become, to a certain extent, a barrier for integration. Such challenges were generally related to language difficulties, psychological problems (homesickness, discrimination, feeling of rejection, cultural misunderstandings), and adaptation to a new living system. The next data analysis section deals with the first research question trying to unfold the factors influencing the students' intercultural identity development during the study abroad programme. While trying to answer this question, data displayed various sociocultural challenges that were due to the absence of intercultural preparedness and guidance which can play an important role in facilitating the development of intercultural identity (RQ3). These challenges contributed in shaping students' intercultural identity.

The sociocultural challenges and difficulties revealed by my research participants were partially due to the lack of participation in social or leisure activities and difficulty in making close relationships or friendships with people from the host country. Students also faced hardships in forming new friendships with locals due to cultural differences and the heavy study schedule which limited their time for socializing. Another important factor that came in the data gathered as effecting students' experience is intercultural stereotyping.

5.3.1. Crossing Cultural and Geographical Borders

Stepping outside the comfort zone was a challenge student confronted as they faced sociocultural novelties. In particular, the students' intercultural experience involved the feeling of loss and intimidation engendered by the confrontation with a foreign environment, which may have perturbed their taken for granted assumptions and thinking. During their experience abroad, students were in a situation where they had to adapt if they wanted to fully and adequately function in the new living conditions, and sociocultural milieu.

Crossing geographical borders entailed facing some sociocultural challenges that required understanding and acceptance so as to adapt to the new host environment. Omar was aware that moving to another culture will be challenging and difficult. He knew that in order to function appropriately in the host society he needed to learn about the cultural differences and become conscious of culture in new and transformed ways. Omar expressed that he did not want to be only with the Algerian group and that he wanted to be socially involved with people from diverse cultures as it would allow him to learn about the unknown and base his judgment of what he experienced first-hand. During his stay, Omar decided to go discover other cities without his group of Algerians in an attempt to discover beyond his cultural boundaries and even beyond his current geographical setting within the host city. Throughout his sojourn abroad, he faced some cultural confusion and hardships to understand some of the new cultural norms and facets, but after a longer period within the host culture he displayed a better understanding of differences and the new cultural norms. After few months in the UK, when asked about his feeling regarding crossing the geographical and cultural boundaries of his home country, Omar said:

'(...) I have never been culturally challenged but here I was challenged because I stepped outside my culture comfort zone, but I guess I did good trying to cope with all the challenges I faced like food, cultural norms, people behaviors and even studies. There are a lot of differences here and I tried to explore them through engaging in social and academic activities on my own with no guidance whatsoever. I am dealing with people from so many backgrounds and religions and sexual orientations and being in a culture totally different is hard and challenging but I would say that my scope has really widened and it's way broader now than when I started the experience' (SSI 1, R4. 20/03/2017)

Omar was used to little or no cultural and religious diversity back home. He expressed that he has never been culturally challenged as he has in the

UK. Omar had to understand the culture, way of living, and different norms and habits to be able to better function in the host environment and cope with it. The awareness of the need and necessity to construct an intercultural knowledge about the host culture merged with a cultural curiosity and need to explore the unknown, drove Omar to engage in different social and cultural activities and interactions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (locals and internationals). This sociocultural immersion process contributed in developing his intercultural knowledge and widening his perspectives.

Full immersion into a culturally different context, where the student becomes a complete outsider, may lead to experiencing ambiguity and discomfort. An aspect of Amira's immersion experience was her feeling of being an outsider to the host culture. Her experience and view of crossing the sociocultural and geographical boundaries of Algeria to the UK were different from Omar's.

Amira: 'I don't feel like I will manage to accommodate and adjust to this cultural environment. It is so different from what I am used to and people are so hard to socialize with. I go out and try to engage and each time it is so stressful, so I prefer staying with my Algerian fellows at least I feel understood and we share a lot of cultural and religious traits' (EI5, R3. 15/02/2017)

After experiencing hardships to socialize with different cultural out groups and adjust fully to the new cultural way of life, Amira withdrew from any type of sociocultural engagement with out-group members due to her feeling of intimidation, stress and confusion. She expressed that the differences were striking and that it was not as easy to mingle and adapt as she thought. She was spending her time only with her Algerian friends as she tried to seek comfort within her group.

Amira: *' I know that I will be living in the UK for the next 3 years for my degree. But I am sure I will not adapt to this culture. I will make sure I stay with some of my friends. I will apply to the same university and rent a house with them. It's just safer this way'* (EI 5, R3.15/02/2017)

Through differences in the data gathered, it can be observed that reactions to intercultural novelties differed according to personality and experience. While Omar was driven by his curiosity towards the strange and willingness to encompass cultural dissonance through interaction and experience, Amira withdrew from any situation where she might confront strangeness due to her experience of racism as well as her overgeneralized stereotypes and reserved personality.

5.3.2. Feeling Socially Excluded

Data clearly demonstrated different students' perspectives, views, and experiences of differences. It also showed that nearly all students felt disappointed or upset because they felt that regardless of their resilience and commitment to engage in the society and trials to cope and adjust, their British counterparts were always distant and less likely to socialize and engage with them (ethnographic observation 02/12/2016. See appendix 2).

Out of eight students, two females (Amira & Hanan) mentioned that they experienced patronizing behavior and discrimination from British people reflecting British supremacy over certain cultures and religions (Islam). What stood out as fundamental to Amira and Hanan's sense of inclusion and belonging was the absence of personal contact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Amira did not feel rejected from a certain community but rather that there was no intercultural community to interact with and get to learn about diversities. They felt that the access to others was out of their reach, and their trial to build up relations and socialize was faced with neglect. Amira and Hanan felt that the space for coming together with others was missing and this made them feel lonely and alienated. They stated that they felt that drinking and partying was the only

A way to make friends. Amira expressed: *'I don't really feel included in this society (...) I really don't know how to put how it feels in words but it's just like am trying to get in but it keeps pushing me out'* (EI 5, R2.06/01/2017)

Hanan also expressed that during the first days of her experience she felt she was treated differently and discriminated against because of her Muslim background. She expressed that inclusion is very important for her to feel adjusted and end her stress related to social rejection.

Hanan: *'To me inclusion is about being treated equally as any other member of the community regardless your background, culture, or language. People should accept me as I am and, I feel I am being rejected by others because I am perceived as different. It's only when I feel accepted that I can make more efforts to learn from my experience, interact more, and do more efforts to make people see what's beyond my appearance'*
(SSI 6, R3.14/02/2017)

Hanan felt rejected by the society she is immersed in. She realized that acceptance is needed in order to be motivated to interact and engage in different sociocultural activities. Hanan knew that the more she communicates with others, the more likely she could find opportunities to discuss her culture and traditions and negotiate a shared cultural understanding in an attempt to create an intercultural welcoming atmosphere. She expressed that friendships were hard to make in the UK and forming alliances with people from different backgrounds to build up an intercultural community could help her develop her interculturality and ameliorate or change others' perceptions about her and her in particular, and her culture in general.

5.3.3. An Adaptability Strategy

During the sociocultural transition of the study abroad period, students found it necessary to adapt to the changes in a new environment and cope with the host cultures' demands. Below are examples from data regarding the students' awareness of the need to adapt:

Amira: 'I don't feel as I fit in this society (...) maybe am doing things wrong when am not trying to engage more. I know I have to if I want to take the most of it better adjust to novelties' (SSI 5, R2. 06/01/2017)

Ramzi: ' I started by staying only with my Algerian friends and exploring things with them, then I figured out am not fully living the experience. I have to step aside and start socializing outside my comfort zone if I want to know about life here and adapt to the culture' (SSI 3, R2.05/01/2017)

Students' comments reflected an awareness of the need to adapt and willingness to adapt to the new social and cultural life. During their first days in the UK, students mostly were grouped together and went around within in-groups (ethnographic Journal, 30/11/2016). However, through their familiarization process with the host environment they came to realize that little would be learned if they do not open up to others. Hence, students started to challenge themselves and move from being a complete cultural outsider to an active and effective cultural insider.

Throughout their adjustment process, students had unique experiences and developed different adjustment strategies. It is likely that both internal factors such as personality and character as well as external factors such as type of relationship with out-group members, experiences, and environment, affected the way students responded to diversities and unfamiliarity. Accordingly, students' coping strategies differed. While some students tried to assert their identity and embrace the change, data

showed that some students felt that hiding their original identities would help them to better adjust to the host culture.

Sara: *'You know unlike veiled girls I don't look Muslim. And honestly, I feel I am privileged with my white skin and fair hair because it happened that I was taken for a European. And sometimes when I don't reveal my true identity, I feel accepted quickly and easily and I feel fitting well'* (EI 7, R2.09/01/2017)

Farah: *'I have noticed on several occasions that when I am with veiled friends people look and treat me differently than when I am alone. I relate that to the fact that as my faith is not displayed through my physical appearance. I tend to be accepted by the host culture. At times, it is better not to mention your differences or beliefs. It makes it easier to be accepted'* (SSI 8, R3.16/02/2017)

Sara and Farah felt more at ease and confident when they melted into the new environment. The feeling of being easily accepted due to the way they looked gave them more confidence to engage in daily intercultural interactions and activities (ethnographic Journal, 10/02/2017). Farah explained that this helped her to adjust easily, but it did not mean letting go of her religion, ethnicity, and beliefs. Similarly, Ramzi explained that while he was with out-group members, he would not reveal his identity unless asked about it. He perceived that his background put him sometimes in the *'being different spotlight'* (EI 3, R2). He explained that when he did not assert his identity he felt more as a *'citizen of the world'* (ibid).

From data we can conclude that the act of not displaying or revealing parts of their cultural identity was triggered mainly by the fear of being judged or inability to adjust and thus not being accepted to be an active cultural member in the new society. Some students used it as a strategy to achieve the goal of sociocultural adaptability.

5.3.4. Intercultural Misunderstandings

The complexity of the intercultural relationships and interactions forged within the new sociocultural context yielded a myriad of expectations. Algerian students have long romanticized perceptions about the UK as an open, diverse, accepting, developed country. When put into the new host culture, the students' expectations were met with existing potentialities such as introvert personalities and the undeniable presence of sociocultural differences. In the midst of cultural disparities, unfamiliar social norms and values, and stereotyping, the process of adaptability was not as smooth and linear as students expected.

Through the process of their cultural immersion, students found themselves outside of their dominant culture, and their marginalization compelled them to view an unfamiliar culture from an external perspective. This was clear from student's reactions to others' behaviors. For example, during the second week of the experience Wassim expressed his disappointment in the behavior of someone British (whom he labelled a friend). The situation revolved around meeting Sam on the street and waving to him expecting him to stop and greet but instead he barely waved back and carried on his way. Wassim said:

Wassim: *' Did you see that? (Astonished), you know that one is in the same pool society and we play every weekend. This is crazy he just went and didn't bother to stop and say hi. This is really rude and impolite. He pretended like he doesn't even know me or something, this is just really upsetting. '*
(Ethnographic journal, 10/12/2016)

Wassim's reaction had a tone of judgmental attitude as he is from a collectivist society where people are friendly, and the sense of harmony and belonging are highly valued. In collectivist societies, people exercise self-control over their behaviors and emotions and are prudent enough not to negatively impact the other as they care about in-groups' relations.

Wassim's expected his friend to stop and greet him before each one carries on (Ethnographic Journal, 10/11/2016). By the third month in the UK, Wassim was asked about the incident and if he has approached Sam again, he replied:

Wassim: *'Well yeah sure we still meet every weekend and hang out. I mean maybe I overreacted that day but now I understand it's just who they are. I mean cultures differ and it doesn't mean that everyone should act my way. That was a cultural misunderstanding maybe now if I approach people as I do in Algeria it will be seen as not respecting personal distance which is fine if you consider the cultural differences. You know each one is free but I come to understand that I should get used to it and adapt because this is how it works here.'* (SSI 3, R3.13/02/2017).

The cultural immersion experience gave students the opportunity to experience cultural differences first hand through interaction, observation, and social practices. It allowed Wassim to change his perspective and learn to accept the differences. Wassim showed a growing intercultural awareness and a shift in the way of seeing things from considering his culture as the norm to taking into consideration cultural differences and acting according to the cultural demands and norms.

Similar to Wassim and within the context of intercultural differences, Hanan experienced an unfamiliar situation, which made her feel uncomfortable and irritated. During a semi structured interview, she narrated her anecdote as follows:

Hanan: *'Last time while I was cooking, I invited Anna for dinner and since she is vegetarian, I have cooked a full vegetable meal to share with her, but shortly after we were sitting at the same table and she had alcohol on the table and she know I don't drink. She just didn't care and that was choking and irritating it's like an intended*

act to make me feel uncomfortable and I just went to my room.'

(EI 6, R2.12/01/2017).

For Anna, drinking is part of her lifestyle, while for Hanan it is unhealthy, religiously forbidden, and regarded as a taboo in the Algerian sociocultural environment. Hanan's expectations were based on the fact that she regarded her way of behaving as the norm. This pushed her to perceive her British flat mate's behavior as disrespectful and inappropriate. However, after a longer immersion in the host culture, Hanan's perceptions changed and that was noticeable through her tolerance of diversities embedded within cultural habits and everyday life. During a cultural night event she was invited to, Hanan was invited to drink. I was anticipating that this would irritate her but surprisingly Hanan kindly refused and explained why she does not drink. As I was seeking to know how she felt about that she declared:

Hanan: '*I have been offered to drink but I knew he probably didn't know that I don't drink. I mean let's see the positive side, he was being kind through offering me and I have just learned that this is a way of living here and it's very different from the one I am used to but I am learning more about them. It is a matter of freedom and culture, I am in a different environment and I am now just trying to adapt (...)*'

(EI 6, R3.15/02/2017).

There was a noticeable change in the way Hanan perceived differences after a considerable time abroad. For example, instead of looking at alcohol as a taboo and drinking as disrespectful, she looked at it as a cultural habit and respected the individual freedom. Hanan's thinking went beyond stereotypes and comparing the new cultural habits to her original culture that she considered as the norm to understanding the new sociocultural environment, accepting and respecting differences, and trying to adapt to the new lifestyle.

In the examples previously mentioned in this section, Hanan and Wassim employed different learning means and strategies such as intercultural learning, initiating contact with others, and taking part in different international and multicultural groups and events to successfully navigate the barriers and challenges throughout their intercultural immersion. Despite their struggles with the cultural diversities and misunderstandings they learned about the new culture through their daily routines, adhering to local norms, and forging relationships with others.

5.3.5. Intercultural Differences

Studying abroad exposed students to the reality of cultural differences. When they were away from their personal support network, students faced new cultural practices and different social attitudes and values. Such differences caused some hardships to understand others and feel understood by them. As a result, students' attitudes differed between withdrawing from social practices after categorizing others as being very different or embracing diversities and learning to cope with differences through a deeper involvement with out-groups.

Youcef and Amira had two different ways of perceiving and reacting to cultural differences. Youcef saw it as an opportunity to learn more and engage more to reach a better understanding of the host culture, while Amira felt very challenged and tried to seek comfort from her co-nationals. Amira narrated some anecdotes to clarify the differences she noticed while in the UK. She expressed her feeling of discomfort around one of her flat mates and his girlfriend, not feeling respected whenever people drink in front of her, and her feeling of disappointment when her flat mate did not share her food with her or initiate discussions and interactions like Amira did. It can be deduced that Amira was comparing every cultural aspect and behavior to the ones in her original culture. She had a high appreciation of her original culture and expected everyone to act in the same way. In part, this was due to the limited intercultural knowledge she had and the lack of interaction with other cultures and people pertaining to diverse backgrounds. Hence, the feeling of confusion led her to stay within her in-

group of Algerian students in a way to assert her identity and sociocultural identification. She declared:

Amira: *'(...) being with my Algerian group of friends just makes me feel more at ease, at least we have a lot in common and I feel comfortable and understood and not judged or something (...) they are so different from us and I don't know what to expect or what is expected from me anymore'* (SSI 4, R2.05/01/2017).

Cultural differences faced by Amira led her to lean towards avoidance rather than discovery of the new and unfamiliar. Through asserting membership in her co-national group, she placed great importance on cultural maintenance. This ongoing strengthening of her original identity influenced, and may continue to hinder, her adaptation to more pluralistic societies and control how open she might be to new experiences and the likelihood of her identity development.

Youcef, on the other hand, expressed how the cultural differences helped him learn more about the others and develop his intercultural knowledge and competence. He asserted that the experience was very culturally enriching, and it was through differences that he learned about others. One of the anecdotes which depicts his openness and acceptance of differences is the following;

'(...) last time I went with a friend to a bar downtown, she was a singer performing there, so there she introduced me to other friends, and they were transgender. It was kind of a shock I have never seen one in my life and even talking about this topic is taboo and controversial, I mean I have never understood this (...). But when I came here, I heard different stories from different people, and I knew where each one came from and I am tolerant Vis a Vis this topic it's personal freedom (...)' (SSI 4, R3.13/02/2017).

The data suggests that study abroad inherently estranges the personal behaviors, preferences, and perceptions through situating them in new contexts characterized by linguistic and cultural differences. Youcef's willingness to learn more despite the challenge of intercultural ambiguity reflected the development of his intercultural knowledge to actively negotiate with others and possibly reposition his sense of self to fully convey and grasp culturally diverse messages.

5.3.6. Physical Appearance as a Cause of Misunderstanding

Data analyzed in this section relates to the first research question dealing with the effect of study abroad on identity development and the factors influencing. Data demonstrated that personal experiences and personality traits are important factors influencing the adjustment process students passed through. Mainly, this section deals with the difficulties faced by veiled students in adapting to the new cultural environment.

The Hijab (headscarf) is a vehicle through which many Algerian-Muslim women assert the religious aspect of their identity. However, according to observations and data gathered, this represented another challenge, to veiled students. Students wearing headscarves perceived that they were directly judged by the host community as different from them in the ways they practiced their faith, culture, and spoke their language.

Algerian Muslim female students wearing the hijab were more vulnerable to discrimination as they were recognizably different from their non-veiled co-nationals or other internationals and migrant groups. They expressed that wearing the veil was a source of discrimination and prejudices in the host environment. For example, two students reported racist behaviors that they faced from the British nationals. Amira stated that:

The experience is not very thrilling (pause) people are calling us names and saying hurtful things like 'go back to your country' and 'take this ugly thing off your head'. Sometimes we

get yelled at the street just because of crossing from the wrong side (pause) I mean we are trying to adapt but it is hard'
(SSI 5, R2. 06/01/2017)

Facing racist acts from people in the host culture had a deep psychological effect on Amira. Her motivation and willingness to embrace the change and actively engage in interactions and social participation became a daily struggle. Despite the hardships, it was clear to Amira that moving beyond stereotypes was necessary to facilitate the adaptation to the new cultural environment.

Having similar perspectives about the way Algerian female veiled students were treated, Hanan talked about an anecdote of an incident which happened while she was shopping with some friends. She reported that:

Hanan: *'(...) my friend was inside the fitting room, she needed a bigger size of a shirt, so I went and brought it to her. When we were leaving the fitting rooms the girl there said that my friend had 6 instead of 5 articles, I explained the whole thing, but she took us for thieves and liars and made a whole scene out of it. We asked her to check cameras or whatever but yet we felt mistreated.'* (SSI 6, R3.14/02/2017)

The incident that Hanan went through made her feel uncomfortable and stressed and confirmed her perceived feeling of being different and unfit in the host environment. For her, the misunderstanding that happened could have been solved calmly through checking security cameras. Hanan believed that she was mistreated and was convinced that things could have gone otherwise if she and her friend were not veiled. She stated that: *'I guess if we were not veiled, we would have been treated differently'* (ibid)

For Hanan such incident could happen to anyone, but it was the way they were dressed that caused negative attitudes and ill-treatment. Hanan and Amira believed that wearing a veil was a source of prejudice and negative judgments in the sociocultural context they were being immersed in. They

linked the social ill-treatment to the fact that they belonged to a stigmatized group that was often featured negatively in international media. Data showed that even non-veiled students shared the same feelings and perceptions of being judged when they were in company of their veiled co-nationals. Farah and Sara asserted that the way people behaved when they were accompanied with their veiled friends is different from when they were alone or with other non-veiled persons (ethnographic journal 25/02/2017). They further explained that people tended to be judgmental and distant when they were with their veiled co-nationals, but friendly when they were not with them.

The tendency of participants to categorize with individuals and groups who share the same religious beliefs were noticeable during the data collection. As students were trying to immerse themselves and engage in contact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, some students (mainly veiled girls) tended to locate themselves within groups that shared the same religion and made connections with Muslims from different cultural backgrounds. During her fourth month sojourn abroad, Amira went to a social event gathering the Muslim community of the city in the city mosque. She explained that she hesitated about attending at first but after the experience she felt at ease and could converse with others from different backgrounds but the same religion without having the feeling of being judged based on her appearance. Amira reported: '*when I was there I felt connected to everyone because of sharing the same religion, we are all the same in one of the most important aspects (...)*'. (SSI 5, R3.13/02/2017)

Sharing the same religion helped Amira to feel connected to a social group that is culturally different from her. For her, asserting her religious identity was of great importance as it enabled her to associate herself with another social group besides her Algerian one. Sharing the same religion made her feel comfortable in interacting and engaging in a process of sharing as she felt understood and not negatively judged. In this vein she added: '*(...) you know there were people from India, other locals,*

Malaysia, and some Arabs, but yet you feel connected... I felt I belong to a group, another one besides my Algerian group' (SSI 5, R3.13/02/2017).

To better illustrate Amira's stance, it is important to consider that in Algeria, being a Muslim is not a salient social identity as more than 90% of the population practice the same faith. However, when residing in the UK, it became more important for Amira to be able to identify religious similarities with others and create a social situation in which commonalities are evident. Thus, meeting strangers who understood her religion, shared it, and greeted her by the 'Assalamou Alaikum', the traditional Muslim greeting, was powerful enough to assert her religious identity and categorize herself with a group sharing the same religion.

To sum up with, students' intercultural immersion experience entailed some intercultural misunderstandings to which students reacted differently. While some followed strategies to build up a ground of mutual understanding or silenced themselves to avoid intercultural conflicts, others withdrew from all kinds of intercultural engagements and tried to categorize themselves only with people sharing the same cultural traits or religious beliefs. This showed that intercultural encounters had a deep influence on students' intercultural identity because it had an impact on their perceptions of differences and the way they were handling it. That is, the data showing the influence of exposure on developing intercultural knowledge and shaping students' perceptions contributed in answering the research question which tries to display the key factors influencing the development of intercultural identity (RQ1).

5.3.7. Intercultural Intergroup Conflict

While abroad, students needed to deal with two different cultures simultaneously. Each one entailed a range of diverse values, perspectives, and norms. Generally, intercultural conflicts were amplified when students were faced with difficult and culturally different individuals and situations. Data analyzed and discussed in the following section shows that intercultural conflicts were present on the intergroup level. This section investigates how students perceived differences and misunderstandings and how they tried to deal with them. In doing so, I try to answer the first research question relating to the factors influencing intercultural identity development unfolding how immersion effected students' behaviors and views associated with their intercultural identity development (RQ2).

During their study abroad experience, students showed attempts to keep a balance between the new cultural differences and their original culture. Hence, during their immersion in the UK, the new information and cultural experiences were filtered through their original cultural identity shaped by a lifetime exposure in their home country. Students were, therefore, constantly put outside their comfort zone where they faced the reality of cultural differences, and were confronted with different cultural practices, social attitudes, and values.

When people from different cultural backgrounds are in a conflict, they have different expectations of how the situation should be handled. During an interview Omar talked about an incident that happened with a new friend he made. He expressed that:

Omar: *'I was expecting that we will engage in a constructive debate about this topic but she took what I said as a judgment while I just meant a question to clarify things, I don't know much about the British people or culture and I thought as a friend she would understand and just explain but she was impulsive and took a defensive stance.'* (SSI 1, R3.10/02/2017)

In this incident Omar asked his British friend about some clarifications regarding what he perceived as an individualistic and introvert nature of the British people. Omar stated that Algerians were friendlier, and they valued relations. His English friend (Katie) saw it as offensive. She expressed that if Omar considered home better, then he'd better stay there and stop trying to learn about people and their culture in the UK (ibid). The trigger of Katie's reaction might be rooted in differences in perceptions from both sides, as well as the way Omar framed his statement, and cultural differences.

Another incident in which Ramzi was involved revolved around getting offended by a player from the adverse team during a soccer game. The incident happened as Ramzi laughed about the player's fall. He reported:

Ramzi: 'I laughed when he slipped but I didn't know he would take it so bad (...) I guess my sense of humor is different from his otherwise he wouldn't have said hurtful things like 'stupid outsider' which I didn't hear actually but my friends reported it back to me. But it's okay I didn't make a fuss out of that' (SSI 3, R4.22/03/2017)

The conflict in this case resulted from both cultural and personal differences. The sense of humour differs from one culture to another, sometimes humour is interpreted differently from one person to the other even within and from the same culture.

Data analyzed in this study reflected that students tended mostly to avoid conflict in situations of intercultural misunderstandings by silencing themselves or trying to find a common ground which could help them escape a tense argument which could have led to a bigger misunderstanding. The following example from data reflects how Hanan tried to establish a common ground of understanding with her British flat mate while addressing the topic of alcohol consumption. Hanan reported that her flat-mate said that some of his Muslim friends consumed alcoholic

beverages signaling that unlike what Hanan claimed, alcohol was not religiously related or forbidden (Ethnographic journal 25/01/2017). Hanan, feeling uncomfortable and nervous about what was said, expressed that she wanted to strongly question the faith of her flat-mate's friends but preferred to calmly clarify her position. She asserted:

Hanan: *'I told him that is it very clearly stated in the Quran what is religiously forbidden. Plus, I also don't consume alcohol as I am convinced that it is unhealthy. And everyone is free to follow or not follow what has been religiously stated in every religious book and take his full responsibility for the consequences. I did not want to get in a religious debate in which each one tries to impose his views as the right ones because it would only cause a cultural misunderstanding or conflict (...)'* (SSI 6, R3.14/02/2017)

Hanan tried to avoid judgmental replies to her flat mate's statement and gave an image of openness and respect of personal freedoms and choices. She followed a strategy where she sought a way out of a misunderstanding, even if this strategy partially satisfied her. This was a result of a deep understanding of the fact that few British have a good deal of information about her religious stances. Hanan adjusted her behavior accordingly and moved from being angry and arguing her friend's claim to overcoming her discomfort and finding a neutral and mutual ground of respect. Hanan's attitude reflected a personal growth and development of a more intercultural accepting self.

5.3.8. Summary of Theme 2

To summarize theme 2, data revealed how the students' intercultural immersion experience entailed a range of intercultural encounters both verbal and nonverbal. Intercultural encounter experiences introduced students to differences they have never faced before as we were neither pre-prepared nor guided throughout their experience. This first culturally diverse exposures introduced some changes in the students' intercultural development. Data showed that the more students engaged in cultural interactions, the more they developed interculturally reflecting that intercultural exposure and encounters are important factors influencing the development of intercultural identity (RQ1). However, reactions to cultural challenges and diversities differed among students. The students' lack of intercultural knowledge pushed some to challenge themselves to learn despite the difficulties and drove others to opt for social separation as an adaptability strategy. Data findings gave also insights regarding the third research question looking at the ways to facilitate students' intercultural identity development by pointing at the role that intercultural knowledge could play in facilitating the sojourning experience and intercultural development. Challenges brought by diversities entailed hardships to adapt to the new environment. These adjustment difficulties were also due to the absence of supervised cultural activities to help engage students in sociocultural practices. Hence, intercultural preparedness and guidance can be considered as an important factor to facilitate the development of intercultural identity (RQ3).

5.4. Theme 3: Intercultural Interaction

Studying abroad granted students the opportunity to experience a broad range of communicative situations where they needed to converse with speakers of the target language to accomplish various communicative goals. This was what I have referred to in the literature review chapter as verbal intercultural contact which signals any form of face to face interaction with a significant other from a different sociocultural background.

The analysis in this section relates to the third research question accounting for the ways we can facilitate intercultural identity development through study abroad programmes as well as the first research question as this theme displays the role of intercultural interactions as a major factor influencing intercultural identity. Data in this section illustrates that students' engagement in intensive intercultural interactions showed improved proficiency level and communicative skills. However, intercultural interaction experiences outcomes differed from one student to another as they could be influenced by various persons, contexts, and their personality and stance.

5.4.1. Networking in the Host Environment

The willingness to build relations with others from diverse cultural groups and widen the social network was mentioned by most of the participants as a key factor for intercultural learning. This learning freed students from the confines of an ethnocentric viewpoint and enabled a pluralistic perspective. Contact with people from diverse backgrounds occurred through group work, interaction and socialization. Students reported that their motivation to step outside their group boundaries and socialize with others stemmed from a desire to learn the personal interaction skills needed to be able to communicate on various levels with people of other cultures.

Students showed their willingness to develop relationships with people from diverse backgrounds through signing up to join clubs and societies in their university. For example, Ramzi expressed during the first interview that his expectations from joining the soccer, the pool, and the reading clubs revolved around his willingness to:

Ramzi: ' (...) *mingle with others and try to know about their culture and their perceptions. I want to maximize my interaction with natives and even other internationals to know more about people and develop my intercultural awareness. I don't want to stay only with the Algerian group, I want to go beyond my own culture*' (SSI 2, R1. 29/11/2016)

Ramzi expressed this curiosity about the others and the diversity surrounding him based on a feeling of confusion as what was heard or learned about the host culture was different from what was seen around him. The willingness to take part in the social life of the host British culture displayed not only the desire to lose mystification and confusion when confronted with the new or the strange, but also a progress through achieving personal growth and extending the individual cultural identity.

Sharing Ramzi's interest about social and cultural diversities, Wassim saw that the study abroad experience is culturally rich, and a ground for intercultural learning. He asserted that it was an opportunity to be culturally prepared for longer future immersions and should be taken advantage of to develop the cultural knowledge and move beyond stereotypes. He showed his motivation to learn about cultural diversities through establishing new relations with the British or internationals as he was talking in the event organized by the student union through saying:

Wassim: *' I like to know other people than my Algerian fellows, I was asking other students about their societies and experiences and talking with other international students and I really want to get involved with them because this whole experience is not about writing a research proposal and sitting for exams and going back home, it is a cultural experience.'* (SSI 3, R2. 05/01/2017)

Wassim expressed the fact that being surrounded all the time by his Algerian friends could not help him develop an intercultural knowledge beyond his home culture. He found a cultural novelty in interacting with people from the host culture or from other cultural backgrounds. He believed that one should not focus only on the academic side of the experience as it would not help him in developing an intercultural understanding of the contextual sociocultural experience outside the academia. He added in this vein:

' (...) it is not the same as living the experience and witnessing every aspect of the culture inside its context. I mean I told you that I thought English people are rigid and reserved but I want to experience it, I don't want to rely just on stereotypes, this is why I want to be part of an international community' (SSI 2, R 1.29/11/2016)

Wassim was able to identify his way of learning about the culture and overcoming stereotypes. He explained that his learning could be achieved through joining societies and mingling with people and getting to know about the cross-cultural differences and similarities. He demonstrated an awareness of the importance of immersion in developing intercultural knowledge and allowing access to the international community. This is the beginning of the developmental process of intercultural identity, which is constructed through the individual's communicative interactions and social practices within the new environment, allowing the person to be linked to more than one culture.

5.4.2. Socialization for Coping: Building a Social Network

During their intercultural immersion, the students' feeling of 'not belonging' (e.g. Farah, SSI 4: R2) started diminishing significantly. Data exhibited that, overall, students started feeling more comfortable with the host culture after spending a significant time trying to grasp different aspect of the sociocultural life. Sara and Farah asserted that during the beginning of their experience, they felt threatened by diversity, and that differences made them feel that they would not be able to fit in and have a social network if they did not make the necessary efforts to approach others. They reported:

Sara: *'I was kind of reluctant and intimidated because it appeared to me that they looked at me as inferior to them as I am different. But as I started mingling and having relations with people, I figured out that some people make you feel appreciated because of your differences and that changed the way I behave. I am more open to diversities, confident, and willing to be socially active'* (SSI 7, R4. 30/03/2017)

Farah: *'You know at first I just felt like defending my culture and country and origins whenever they ask me about where I come from or my religion and culture. But that urge vanished and am just proud to discuss diversities and learn more about them'* (SS8, R4. 04/04/2017)

Similarly, Ramzi and Omar stated that their engagement in different clubs, activities, and student societies helped them build a network constituting of both locals and internationals. Students reported that learning about culture through its people is a very *'fruitful and culturally enriching and eye opening'* (Wassim, EI 2, R3. 04/01/2017).

Within cultural diversities, students tended to form social networks as a strategy to better cope with the change and minimize emotional and physical ups and downs. Some students started establishing routines that

incorporated activities with different group members ranging from reading groups, sport clubs, to cultural societies or just social nights outside. The following excerpts from the third round of semi structured interviews demonstrate students' efforts to engage in social interactions and form friendships;

Omar: *'having a network of friends I met here has helped me expand my perceptions (...) it is indeed hard to approach them but once you do, you can bond so easily, for example me and some people at the pub cheered for the same football club and we bonded as we had a common ground of interest'* (SSI 1, R3. 10/02/2017)

In a similar line of thought Wassim reported:

Wassim: *'It is true that they are introvert, but I had to make the first move as I understood how they function. I made some friends with whom I hang out on weekends and really enjoy their company. I learned a lot culturally speaking from them and we kind of formed a little family.'* (SSI 2, R3. 20/03/2017)

In a clear display of her understanding of the social behaviors and willingness to construct diverse social networks, Hanan reported:

Hanan: *'At first I was very reluctant to know anything, and differences intimidated me. But by the time I started to open up, to be the first to approach people, to accept invitations to different events and I came a long way from where I started. I feel socially comfortable'* (SSI 6, R3.14/02/2017)

As the previous data excerpts show, participants reported difficulties associated with socializing with locals at first. The Algerian culture is typically collectivist, thus Algerian students faced some hardship while attempting to make friends in a western culture that emphasizes individualism over relatedness. As shown throughout data, students came

to understand that they should open up and approach others. This led them to learn that unlike what they first believed, host culture members could be individualistic but nice and approachable. Students, such as Omar, started looking for common grounds to start conversations on that basis. Wassim established a routine which included engaging in different sociocultural activities with friends from different cultures who formed, together, a family-like relationship. As for Hanan, she developed an openness to unfamiliarity which helped her to feel more comfortable when faced with the challenges of differences and diversities.

Data examined showed that students with more local and international friends showed a low level of perceived stress caused by the sociocultural differences in the host culture. When students had frequent interactions with other internationals, they tended to better understand humor, had a positive attitude towards differences, displayed compassion, and coped better with the demands and norms of the host cultural environment. It was noticed, for example, during a cultural night event led by students, students who were used to interact with others found it easy to mingle and talk to people from all parts of the world and advertise for their culture and traditions. Meanwhile, students who were used to little interactions with out-group members had a limited or non-diverse social network and were mainly seeking comfort through being with their co-nationals as a way to assert their cultural identity (ethnographic Journal, 20/02/2017).

To sum up, the analysis above relates to the first and the third research questions. It relates to the first research question as it gives insights on how we can facilitate the development of intercultural identity during SAP (guiding students throughout their cultural exposure through encouraging active social participation). It also relates to the first research question as it displays that building social networks is one of the key factors that influence the development of intercultural identity. Data revealed in this section that the intercultural immersion experience helped students construct a culturally and socially diverse social network. This latter led students to better learn about the culture and hence develop their tolerance

of ambiguity, compassion, and understanding which enhanced their cultural identity and contributed in its development. Students' intercultural learning experience was enriched through their active participation within the sociocultural milieu.

5.4.3. Social and Interactional Confidence

While students were immersed in a new setting, transitional and adjustment challenges required interactional practices as an important dynamic for entry into the host culture. Integrating into the socially interactive domain constitutes a very important component of the adjustment process. Data revealed that the students' ability to adjust to a new cultural environment was reflected in meaningful interaction experiences laying the ground to significant intercultural knowledge construction, which is necessary to intercultural identity development. For example, Youcef expressed how much interactional experiences outside the academic setting helped him in developing his interactional confidence because he had a cultural knowledge that helped him to behave according to the social norms and feel more socially fit in the new environment:

Youcef: 'Inside university, contact is not that diverse or culturally enriching. But outside with natives and internationals my contact experiences are helping me to know a lot about the sociocultural living and even how to approach others, what is okay to talk about and what is not (...) I am learning and I had a lot of stereotypes that I overcame now and it is making me feel like part of me is fitting here and understanding where all those differences come from'
(SSI4, R3. 13/02/2017)

Youcef amongst other students such as Omar, Ramzi, and Sarah, was very willing to engage in different intercultural interaction experiences to construct an understanding which helped him to adjust better to the cultural norms and social demands of the host environment. As he studied together with his co-nationals in one group, cultural diversity within the academic

context was very low pushing him to take further steps to converse outside the academia.

At the beginning of their experience, the majority of students reported self-doubt in their English language interactional abilities. Omar expressed that he felt '*not that confident*' when it came to initiating and maintaining conversations with host or international persons when he first arrived to the UK. When talking about instances of meeting new people, Wassim reported that it was hard approaching people

Wassim: '*It's is culturally different here. Not only the everyday life, their celebrations, the way they organize themselves, family ties, and friendship but also how they form friendships (...) I won't lie that I felt weird approaching others especially if they give you that weird look which feels like 'do we know you?' but as I am interacting more and I get to better maintain relations and interactions with confidence*' (SSI 2, R2. 03/01/2017)

Data showed that students, such as Wassim and Omar were less likely to initiate a discussion at the beginning of the experience compared to their final weeks in the host culture as they started initiating and engaging in the discussions. For example, Wassim boosted his interactional competence and was very keen to challenge himself and step outside his comfort zone and be the first to approach others (Ethnographic Journal 10/01/2017). During students' social events, activities, sport societies, leisure entertainment nights, Wassim started to be the one initiating discussions and sharing his experiences with others. Similarly, Sarah expressed that the experience helped her gain an interactional confidence through the cumulative process of interaction with more experienced speakers during which she made use of the knowledge constructed in similar instances of discursive practices (SSI 8, R2. 08/01/2017)

Data demonstrated that during studying abroad, intercultural communication became of major importance to students to understand the new culture they were experiencing. In this vein, Ramzi expressed his deep interest in intercultural interaction, and said that his club activities, friends in dorms, and other established connections helped him practice the communicative sociocultural aspect of the language in the host community and establish social networks in the host environment.

Ramzi: *'The more I interact with others from diverse cultural backgrounds and take part in various events, the better I get to understand more about people, culture, and different views and perspectives that I couldn't grasp before. I feel more confident while communicating now and I tend to enjoy diversities (...)'*
(EI 3, R3.15/02/2017)

Continuous and intensive interaction with out-group members was crucial in developing students' confidence in intercultural interaction. Day to day interaction with native speakers enabled students to construct different resources to use later in interactional practices. Students showed positive attitude and self-initiated access to community and an on-going reflection on relationships and how friendship works in the new culture. All these reflections and understanding are essential elements in the process of intercultural adaptability and identity development.

5.4.4. The Influence of Stereotypes on Intercultural Interactions

Contact with an out-group member can represent a novel social situation for which the participant had no pre-existing scripts about how they should behave. In some situations, students entered intercultural interactions with others with the inner fear of negative psychological consequences such as frustration, intimidation and loss of control or negative evaluation and judgment by the out-group members such as language deficiency. These fears were mainly due to the fact that students were confused and unsure about expectancies, how to act with others, and others' perceptions.

One of the students who had pre-judgements which affected her interaction with out-groups was Amira. During a large cultural event organized by students with the purpose of getting to socialize and learn about each other's cultures, Amira was barely interacting with anyone from out-groups and stayed with her co-nationals. When asked about her perceptions about people she met, she replied:

Amira: 'Well I didn't do a lot of socialization. I don't know what to expect, I don't know how they are going to perceive me. I have had some bad experiences of people insulting me in the streets because of my veil, maybe because of that. When I interacted with Asians who were also Muslims and foreigners I kind of felt more at ease, but with natives their English is so perfect I am afraid to make mistakes (laughing) language barrier. When I talk with them, I feel intimidated, I feel I am jeopardizing my safety, my comfort zone, I don't know.' (SSI 5, R1.02/12/2017).

The feeling of stress and intimidation in this case was generated mainly by past experiences as well as the lack of familiarity with the other group. Also, Amira favored contact with out-groups with similar religious traits and status (foreigner to the target culture), which reflected that sharing similarities lowered her level of anxiety and confusion and somehow helped her to be accepted by the others. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge about the other cultural groups reinforced her negative stereotypes. Stereotypes in this case influenced the perceptions, behaviors, attributions and effective responses to out-group members. Due to her previous experiences, Amira built up a negative perception of the out-group. Such perception discouraged her from interacting with members of the target culture group.

Language is another barrier that Amira has reported as hindering her interactions. Her perceptions of being judged on the level of how good her English was stemmed from her uncertainty. While experiencing

intercultural encounters, Amira was not able to predict attitudes, feelings, values and behaviors and hence preferred to minimize interaction with natives and categorize herself with her co-nationals or to a lesser extent out-group member who shared her religion and her position as being an alien to the British culture.

It was observable through the data that the impact of intercultural stereotypes on intercultural interaction experiences was unavoidable and stereotypes constituted an important part of the interaction, adaptation processes and daily living experiences. While stepping inside the English culture, all participants stereotyped English people as being 'individualistic and they don't open up to others' as well as being tolerant to differences. My participants built a stereotype that was a simplified preconception of the British people. The stereotype of one cultural group towards the other are formed in various ways. When students were asked about what their stereotypes were and from where they stemmed, their answers were as follows:

Wassim: *'Well according to what I have read in books and what I heard on media and stuff, British people are very reserved which is I guess true. However, if you approach them, they are responsive for example to show you the way I don't know they try to help you with whatever you need but no further than that (...)'* (SSI 2, R2. 03/01/2017)

Omar: *' Well I have read and learned that British people are very cold, but they are nice and helpful. It is hard to build up friendship with them they are not as open and assertive as us but yeah they are nice'* (SSI 1, R2. 03/01/2017)

Wassim and Omar's previous perceptions about the English people as being individualistic and cold influenced their initial willingness to socialize and interact with them. Their social engagement was restricted to greetings or casual discussions revolving around customer and client talk or asking for directions and guidance. Such superficial and casual

discursive practices led them to declare that people of the host culture are 'nice' but without altering their initial judgement. Thus, their willingness to engage in the socialization process was refrained by their previously held stereotypes positing that English people are hard to approach.

Contrary to Wassim and Omar, who had negative preconceived judgments about the host members of the country they were immersed in, Farah held positive ideas about the host culture and people which were faced by different realities once in the host culture. She explained:

Farah: *'Well, I thought that the British are very open minded, tolerant, I thought that we won't be discriminated or something. For example, if you compare to France, England is more cosmopolitan they don't care but my friends experienced some extreme racist acts'* (SSI 8, R2. 08/01/2017).

Farah idealized the English people and held them in high esteem compared to others such as the 'French'. It is noticeable through the interview excerpt that her expectations and ideas met different facts that she sensed throughout her experience.

Students, through seeing and judging the out-group as being individualistic, conservative, and uneasy to approach, built a less positive image for the out-group against a positive image of self (self as being easy to approach and open). While interacting with the sense that the 'others' were being individualistic, the interaction experience could not be effective. Stereotypes were fundamental to the way students processed exterior information and made sense of their experiences. Students were judging others through what they heard and through the lens of their own culture, and it was only through more interaction that a wider cultural knowledge about the other could be build and better understanding of the out-group and its culture could be reached. Later in the analysis (during the last days of the experience) more emphasis is put on the change of students' perceptions of the out-groups and the role of deeper and frequent intercultural interaction on correcting or confirming stereotypes.

It is also worth mentioning that through the students' answers about the source of their stereotypes, media was brought up as one of the most influential sources of stereotype shaping. While communication technologies may have shortened the physical distance, it might have as well widened the cultural distances.

5.4.5. Displaying Interculturality through Interacting in the Host Culture Language

Data appeared to confirm the commonly held view that intercultural immersion boosts the individuals' willingness to speak the target language. During their experience abroad, students had several opportunities to engage in intensive intercultural communication using the host culture language, English. Students' use of English was a vehicle to ensure mutual intelligibility between them and their British, or other international counterparts. The students' daily use of the target language (English) led to the development of their linguistic and communicative competence which, in turn, contributed to shaping their intercultural identity.

The linguistic shift that students witnessed during their experience in the UK granted them entrance into a new speech community characterized by sociocultural diversities. The data that I will discuss in this section is particularly relevant to the second research question revolving around displaying an intercultural identity through experiential learning and different behavioral patterns such as speaking the host culture language.

Speaking another language allowed students to switch into an alternative cognitive system with some cultural understandings that were considered as unfamiliar or odd within their original cultural context. Social and cultural understandings which revolved around subjects of sexuality, alcohol consumption, religious beliefs, or intercultural experiences had a bigger share in the students' English linguistic repertoire than that of French or Arabic. This was strongly noticed as students had difficulties in expressing their perceptions and understandings about those previously

mentioned subjects in Arabic (mother tongue) claiming that the causes were mainly: finding it disrespectful to tackle in Arabic (mainly gender talk and sexuality as they are still seen as taboo subjects in Algeria), lacking the necessary word repertoire in dialectal Arabic due to the fact that topics of sexuality or alcohol are not socially discussed, and getting used to expressing themselves in English to grant themselves entry to different speech communities and develop their interactional competencies and intercultural knowledge.

To illustrate the findings better, in the following example, Youcef explained the reasons behind expressing himself mainly in English even with his co-nationals and during the present research interviews. He declared:

Youcef: 'Generally, when I am talking about my cultural experience here, there are some stuff that I can't explain in Arabic, it would feel socially and culturally inappropriate. But I can do so in English because here they are accepted and talked about' (EI 4, R2. 10/01/2017).

The subject that Youcef was referring to mainly in the interview was the LGBT community. We can understand that through the use of the host culture's language, Youcef developed a system of understanding that correlates to the host culture and experience. Switching to English enabled him to openly talk about a topic that is seen as very controversial and taboo in many countries such as Algeria. The topic is discussed in today's world political, social, and economic arenas giving it a big linguistic repertoire which was easily accessible to Youcef.

The use of English during the study abroad experience provided students with the opportunity to engage in social interactions. Data suggested that having language as a common link constituted an important factor for the students' integration into a diverse cultural and social group, or community on a larger scale. For example, Hanan asserted that she felt unconfident with her linguistic and communicative skills and was

constantly afraid of failing the expectations of natives regarding her English mastery and eloquence. She asserted:

Hanan: *'Most of the time I am really stressed out during my interactions with speakers of English because I am afraid I can't deliver the message eloquently especially that they are culturally very different and I have no clue how they would interpret what I say or do or how they would see me in the light of my cultural background'* (EI6, R2. 12/01/2017).

However, throughout her immersion experience, Hanan had many opportunities to engage in intercultural interactions with people from diverse backgrounds and develop an ethnorelative mindset. The process of intercultural exchange enabled Hanan to go beyond cultural generalizations and acquire and reflect on a new culture and language. She shifted from a state of intimidation and confusion caused by differences to appreciation and acceptance and a strong willingness to integrate the sociocultural and linguistic environment of the host culture. In this vein, she expressed:

Hanan: *'Speaking English is a blessing because you can converse with others and get to know about them and their cultures. It's like my brain now is so used to English that I am using it even in my daily conversations sometimes even with my co-nationals. I was a bit intimidated at first when I talked with natives but now, I know they don't judge your language as long as you are being understood'* (SSI 6, R2. 07/01/2017)

Speaking English granted Hanan and her fellow co-nationals entry to a new speech community. Their willingness to use English often in their everyday life, even with their in-group (ethnographic observations), and during the interviews with the researcher reflected not only their development of a cognitive system by which they display a greater openness and acceptance of diversity but also their willingness to adapt to the host environment. Through speaking English, students broke an

important barrier facing intercultural socialization. The experience enabled participants to construct a wide intercultural knowledge which allowed them to understand the nature of their everyday experience. Having the ability and willingness to use English to converse with others constituted a common linguistic ground which helped in facilitating intercultural learning which is very important in the developmental process of intercultural identity.

5.4.6. Building the Sense of Community

In order to build a sense of an intercultural community, students had to understand the culture beyond the surface level. This understanding was reached through intercultural interactions, immersion, social practices, and sharing. Through their intensive intercultural immersion, students came to understand that in order to have a fruitful experience they had to relocate to the new sociocultural context and strive to establish functional relations with the new environment. Hence students started engaging more with local and international members of the society in an attempt to construct a knowledge that would help them move beyond group boundaries and develop a sense of belonging to a diverse group. To better illustrate students' attitudes and behaviors driven by the willingness to build a sense of community, the following extracts were taken from semi structured interviews when students were asked about their daily living and relations with others from diverse cultural backgrounds:

Youcef: 'I would be the last person to call myself a social, outgoing person. I am also a bit apprehensive to socialize with strangers. But that stopped after I spent some time in the campus dorms. I have met really nice people from UK and abroad and as we shared the house facilities as the kitchen and the living room we started talking and exchanging opinions and even cooking and eating together. I felt we are kind of a family there, we became very close' (SSI 4, R4. 22/03/2017)

Youcef was a shy person who had not the courage to approach people unless he was approached. Living on campus with people from diverse cultural backgrounds gave him the chance to meet and engage with others. The process of sharing and exchanging helped him to open up to others and learn about diversities. He overcame his fear of diversities and intimidation of others' expectations, developed his communicative competence, and constructed an intercultural knowledge which enabled him to enjoy the intercultural experience abroad. Youcef's immersion and socialization helped him to effectively adjust to the host culture resulting in a feeling of belonging to a socioculturally diverse group of people.

Similar to Youcef's perception about socialization, Ramzi asserted that knowing people from different cultures and bonding with them helped him make the most of his cultural experience as it helped him develop his cultural understanding, boost his communication skills, categorize himself with different groups and better cope with diversities. He reported:

Ramzi: 'I came for not only the academic goals but for the cultural experience and I can say it was so rich and diverse. I have now my teammates with whom I play, hang out, have fun and we are from different cultures but feel so bonded as well'
(SSI 3, R4. 22/03/2017)

Building an intercultural sense of community abroad is a multi-dimensional and complex process which requires an active engagement of students and participation in different social practices. Students started the program lost and confused. However, they developed through their continuous daily immersion, strong relations with people from out-groups with whom they could identify on some common grounds such as passions, interests, or simply as they were driven by intercultural curiosity. As Ramzi and Youcef, Sara explained that she felt like she could count on her flat mates from the UK just as any other friend she had. She explained that they were, including herself, very individualistic and self-centered at the beginning of the sojourning experience, but after a considerable time together they opened up to one another. She explained that they lived like

a family and shared their stories, meals, perceptions, and cultural and social norms and habits. She also expressed:

Sara: *'Our lives are very different and so as our perceptions and cultures, but that's good because it teaches you about differences and you open a window upon a new side of the world'* (EI 7, R4. 02/04/2017)

In this study, data showed that successful intercultural experiences depended on several factors such as contact, expectations, culture, and personality. Regarding intercultural contact, some students reported their disappointment with the depth of these contact experiences claiming that they are too superficial, and the commitment of their 'friends' from the out-groups was very minimum. Farah reported that:

Farah: *'British people are nice and they seem very kind and friendly but actually they are just not easy to befriend and at times they are too self-absorbed to give attention and time to others they just got to talk to. Last time during the student union event they were in circles not mingling like other internationals and you could sense they were not interested in socializing'* (SSI 8, R1.05/12/2016)

During her first weeks in the UK, Farah tried to socialize with others in an attempt to learn about the culture and life through its people. She was trying to talk and engage in conversations with different people. However, for the British, the social circle was already formed before meeting Algerian students and some did not tend to seek out other intercultural relations, which led to superficial contact restricted to the event or the activity of the moment and this contact was barely maintained afterwards.

Forming intercultural relations spurred from communication and significantly influenced the students' way of knowing and acting in relation to their social relationships and the outside world. These connections helped students explore their understanding of ambiguities and clarify

some of their previous stereotypes and beliefs. What Hanan reported is a good example to illustrate this;

Hanan: *'At first I didn't know well about the culture. I mean back home we are tactile and very impulsive but here for example touching the other when talking is never done. But once while walking I put my hand around my friend's arm. I totally forgot that's a thing we do among friends while walking and then remembered that she might think of it as being awkward and I pulled my hand back, but she didn't react to it'* (SSI 6, R3. 14/02/2017)

It is noticeable that the lack of knowledge about the other culture was limited to presumptions that might have come in the way of students' spontaneity and made them feel under the pressure of acting according to the sociocultural norms of the host society. Students' lack of knowledge about the culture also influenced their intercultural relation formation as their expectations of out-group members were different from what they actually faced. Omar reported that back home you could form a friendly relation with someone even if the first contact was a game, a class, or a social night. He came to the UK thinking he would have a lot of local friends. However, his contact with others stayed very superficial as British *'are not as friendly as my people back home, they are nice but not easy to bond with as they keep distance and privacy'* (Omar, EI 1: R3). This comment reflected the influence that cultural differences and expectations have on the intercultural friendship formation.

It is worth mentioning that by the end of the experience students reported that they had more opportunities to engage with their 'friends' from the host culture. Whether intercultural 'friends' were in contact through food, games, or people, at this stage they had the chance to form a stronger relationship with others, and better learn and understand the culture. As far as cultural differences were concerned, at the final stage of the study abroad program, participants reported that they did not necessarily consider them as impediments. Rather, they tended to emphasize their

shared similarities and, at the same time, understand or respect the differences being identified.

All in all, we can say that through the experience of studying abroad, students started exploring new cultural values and contexts, and the relationship between their lives and the lives of people overseas. Such experiences helped them to become more globally rounded citizens and make connections with others in a first step to build a diverse intercultural sense of belonging to a community. This sense of community building entails the ability of categorization with more than one cultural group, which highlighted a very important part of intercultural identity development. Hence, intercultural immersion and contact strongly influenced students' behaviors and perceptions as they became well culturally rounded individual, adjusted to the new context, adapted to changes, and able to identify with diverse cultural sides and groups.

5.4.7. Contexts of Intercultural Contact

During the first months of their experience abroad, student felt that their stay was socially and psychologically challenging and have faced different challenging situations when it came to intercultural contact. Even-though contact with others represented an opportunity for personal growth, it also caused some confusion for students who reported that the more they engaged in interactions with British or international groups and individuals, the more challenged they felt and the more they learned about sociocultural norms and the way of life (Ethnographic journal, 12/12/2016). Students reported in their interviews two main contexts of verbal intercultural contact situations (figure 13, p.197) which represented two distinct sources of intercultural knowledge constructions: the academic context (formal contact), and the social outside environment (informal contact)

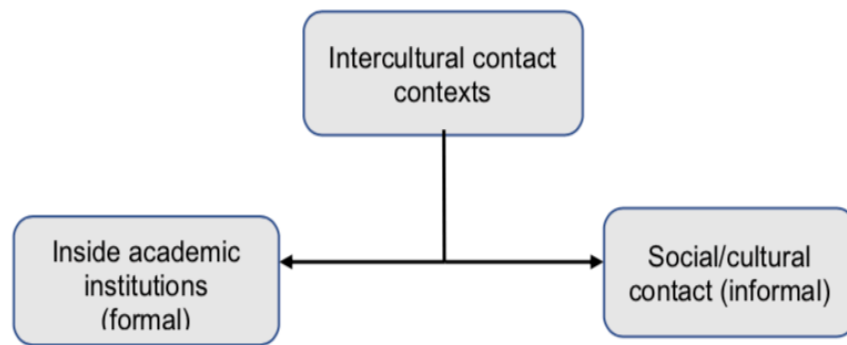


Figure 13. Contexts of verbal intercultural encounters

5.4.7.1. Contact inside the Academic Context

The academic environment is a context that was not explored by this study due to the fact that students were placed into study groups of only Algerians, and contact was formal (about lessons, study tasks), with out-group members restricted to academic staff (teachers, student representatives, administrators) (ethnographic Journal, 16/11/2016). However, the beneficial outcome of formal contact came up in the data gathered. Mainly, interaction inside the academic context was considered as a way not only to learn about the language but also about some cultural aspects of the host culture through some small in-class discussions.

The beneficial outcome of contact inside the academic context reported only by two students (Amira and Youcef) and are highlighted in this analysis. Amira, who experienced a withdrawal from sociocultural engagement and interaction during her experience abroad, stated that she had very limited contact with out-group members. She reported that she took advantage of having her teachers around to have a sense of the British culture and way of life. This taste of culture was not given through lectures but small casual interactions:

Amira: 'I haven't been engaged within the community outside university (...) but I do have contact with people in university, especially my teachers. I mean during the lessons I am not learning about culture but I have a very nice teacher, she

makes me feel very comfortable and sometimes I ask her about cultural connotations and norms here. I asked her how they celebrate Christmas and I told her about how we celebrate the prophet's birthday and about foods and it was nice (...) I know that if I get to have friends from other cultures I will know more about differences, my friends here told me. But I am not willing because I feel I will be stigmatized.' (SSI 5, R3. 13/02/2017)

Amira acknowledged the scarcity of contact with people from out-groups as she expressed that she did not want to be reminded that she did not belong there and hence decided to withdraw from any social activity. However, according to what she reported, her contact inside university was very superficial, short, and rare, and interactions did not offer much intercultural knowledge.

Similarly, Youcef expressed during the beginning of the experience that he believed that his interactions inside the academic institutions would be enough to learn about the culture. He had little contact with out-group members as he was slow to engage and take part or initiate a discussion. However, by the end of the experience Youcef reported:

Youcef: 'I think interactions inside the academic institutions are good but very poor culture wise. I mean at first, I thought it will be enough, but when I got introduced to societies and got to meet people and form friendship I realized engagement with others formally inside institutions is not enough to give you insights on everyday life and cultural norms. I mean now I feel more connected to this culture and society and adapting better by the days' (SSI 4, R3. 13/02/2017)

It was clear that in the second case the student's interactions outside the academic context yielded positive identifications with the target culture, and the desire to integrate into the host society's sociocultural environment. Both students were aware of the importance of out-group socialization outside the academic formal context, though the way they

reacted to it was different. Amira's contact outside academia stayed very limited while Youcef maximized his intercultural interactions and widened his social network outside the academic context.

Data revealed that, for students, the academic setting remained the only English language contact domain where the intercultural exposure is limited or non-existent making the learning process receptive, interculturally poor and purely academic. When asked about their contact inside the academic institutions, students reported:

Omar: *'It is very limited. We talk about coursework and tasks. Nothing about our experiences or hardships or anything like that'* (EI 1, R3. 10/02/2017)

Wassim: *'There is a subject about culture that we have but it revolves around different research and theories about intercultural communication or competence. You take nothing out about the real host culture'* (E2, R3. 04/01/2017)

Farah: *'There is absolutely nothing cultural except learning about the culture of academia and how they work but nothing about sociocultural norms, perceptions, and expectations'* (EI 8, R3. 17/02/2017)

Contact inside academic institutions and the way the study programme and subjects were decided upon did not give students an appropriate cultural knowledge to be prepared interculturally to effectively function in the new cultural setting. Students needed to be familiar with different aspects of the sociocultural way of living as they were never immersed in a culturally different environment before. Students expressed that contact within the academic institutions did not provide cultural insights into the social or cultural norms and values.

5.4.7.2. Contact outside the Academic Context

In contrast to formal interactions inside academic institutions, informal interactional experiences outside academia revealed a significant influence on students' perceptions change, attitudes, and self and other categorization. Most participants (except Amira and to a lesser extent Youcef) were able to create chances for intercultural engagement and interactions with people from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. Students' efforts were driven by the willingness to construct an intercultural knowledge, which would help them better understand and cope with the host environment, as well as build relations with out-group members. Students wanted to learn about diverse perspectives and be able to go beyond group boundaries and categorize themselves with more than one cultural group through their intercultural immersion across their geographical borders (Ethnographic journal, 3/1/2017. See appendix 2).

Crossing the borders to the UK was particularly important to students' growth and very enriching as it allowed direct contact between them and individuals of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds, which, in turn, led to creating bonds that made sociocultural adaptation and integration easier. This is what happened with Ramzi, as his close and intensive intercultural interactions with out-group members reduced his in-group favoritism and pushed to engage more with people with backgrounds different from his. Ramzi expressed that his interactions outside academic institutions were more culturally enriching. He had the opportunity to form close relationships with people from diverse backgrounds and got introduced to various aspects of the host culture. He stated:

Ramzi: ' *It is very culturally enriching I mean god I have learned so much and I feel so confident to be put in whatever zone outside my comfort zone (...) I am hanging with English and international friends more than my fellow Algerians and I have learned a lot by doing so. I developed good relations with them and it's really amazing to learn everyday more*' (SSI 3, R3. 13/02/2017)

For Ramzi, his intercultural knowledge has been constructed through his interactions with friends from diverse cultural backgrounds. This further helped him to know how to behave and understand other's comportments, perceptions, way of life, and culture. Although his co-nationals could teach him some cultural aspects of their respectful cities, it was still restricted to dialectal variations, food, or traditional clothes. It was his interactions outside his group boundaries which helped him to become more intercultural through displaying open-mindedness, understanding, and a better handling of diversities.

Throughout the initial days of the students' experience, stereotypes occupied a pivotal role in their intergroup contact and relations due to the wide range of cognitive information processing biases. According to data, this was mainly a result of the poor intercultural knowledge about the host culture and people, and the different students' sociocultural expectations which were different from the reality. As an illustrative example from data, Wassim was one of the students who felt confused because of poor intercultural knowledge he had about the context he was immersed in. He formed some intercultural stereotypes based on his first interactions. His negative initial judgment was mainly due to unmet expectancies:

Wassim: *'(...) I felt reluctant because they gave the impression of not caring so why would I even try (...) But then when I have joined societies and sport clubs I started to have intensive daily discussions about everything and it was really great. I have learned much about the culture and about them. It's just a cultural thing, they are very nice and friendly when approached (...)'* (SSI 2, R3. 11/02/2017)

Wassim's contact with people from the UK and other countries fostered positive feelings towards them. Wassim's contact outside institutions was not governed by any rules of academic status or ranking which enabled him to discuss personal and sociocultural habits and values. He expressed that he was more comfortable to talk about different topics ranging from

cultural habits, celebrations, relationships, taboos, and many other subjects which could not be tackled in a formal encounter or discussion.

Apart from sport clubs, societies, and social events, for some students, university accommodation provided a sociable and comfortable atmosphere where they met international and host students. Hanan expressed that her university accommodation had people of different nationalities and it helped her understand a lot about diversities and cultures. She asserted that her daily contact with them helped her to overcome her initial stereotypes and eventually accept the differences and adapt to the new way of life (EI6, R3.15/02/2017).

5.4.8. Summary of Theme 3

To sum up theme 3, intercultural contact had an important role in enabling a better understanding of cultural differences and views. It helped students be more tolerant, engaging, and active. Students displayed more openness and better adjustment. However, in some cases, contact was very restricted and limited. This section went through two main contact contexts. Academic and sociocultural contexts were assigned to intercultural contact based of the student's experiences of intercultural verbal contacts with others (British and internationals). Data revealed that contexts given by students differed in cultural richness in the sense that one of the contexts (informal contact contexts) provided deeper insights and broader knowledge of the host environment cultural diversities. Hence, according to data, intercultural contact outside the academic context represents one of the main factors influencing intercultural identity development during SAP (RQ1). The following table (table 13) summarizes the contexts and the contextual interactional situations:

Formal Contextual Contact	Informal Contextual Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students practices (classes, seeking help, students/teacher interaction) -Academic practices (conferences, assignments, using academic English) -Governance -Administration (library, use of facilities). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Natural environment (shopping, use of transportation) -Sport (team play) -Student led social events -Pubs and restaurants -Dorms

Table 13. Contexts of Intercultural Contact

Data analysed in this section displayed that intercultural immersion experiences, intercultural interactions, experiential learning, self and other perceptions, and exposing to cultural diversity through studying abroad were all key players in the development of intercultural identity. Data showed that in the process of adapting to the new context and trying to understand the others, some students faced some difficulties due to the lack of intercultural preparedness and the absence of cultural orientation during their study abroad experience. Hence, data not only answered the first research question through accounting for the main factors influencing intercultural identity development, but also gave insights on the factors hindering the participants' intercultural development such as the absence of pre-departure intercultural preparedness and in-programme orientation. In doing so, this theme's data contributed to answering the third research question through suggesting that intercultural unpreparedness and absence of orientation played an influential role in the cultural difficulties faced by students during their alien cultural experience. That is, the development of intercultural identity can be facilitated through preparing students for their intercultural immersion and providing support and orientation when needed during their sojourning experience.

5.5. Theme 4: Intercultural Identity Development

Cultural hybridity experienced by students during their time abroad was a product of their intercultural experience and social practices. According to data, hybridity within the host environment enabled the development of an intercultural identity in which a fusion of cultures and diversities was created. Data analyzed in this section demonstrated the willingness of students to let loose of the strong belief in a pure original distinct identity and embrace different intercultural facets. This analysis relates to the second research question aiming at unfolding the behaviors and perceptions associated with the development of intercultural identity.

5.5.1. Cultural Hybridity and Intercultural Identity Development within the Host Environment

Students seemed willing to embrace the intercultural learning opportunities granted by their study abroad experience in the UK. The experience of living and studying in the UK, and particularly encounters with people from different social and cultural backgrounds, allowed students to challenge their assumptions about differences. For example, Amira discussed how she became aware of her prejudices about people in UK after some time into the experience. She said: *'When I came, I had some bad experiences where I felt attacked because of my religion and ethnicity. I overgeneralized the belief that everyone is racist, intolerant, and unwelcoming here (...).'* (SSI 6, R4. 24/03/2017).

Amira had couple of incidents that overshadowed her understanding of the host culture and people. Her overgeneralized judgments were based on racism she faced and bad treatment since the first days of her experience in the British society. However, she expressed that her views changed after an extended sociocultural immersion. She added:

Amira: *' (...) after I met some people, after I could discuss my faith and culture with some from different backgrounds and I could see how people treat me and accept me, I came to*

understand that I was wrong and I was claiming to be judged while at the same time I was judging not based on enough knowledge' (ibid)

Due to her first established stereotypes which resulted in withdrawal from cultural activities and social practices, Amira could later understand that cultural understanding transcended any discourse about religion or negative judgments.

Contrary to Amira, Ramzi who had the chance to be involved in the host culture community, had a resilient and optimist attitude to cultural diversity. He felt that shared interests and hobbies can function as bonding and connecting sources in any site of diversity and difference. He emphasized that the importance of actively engaging in the society as the experience of living abroad helped in opening to others and to cope with the world's diversity. He declared:

Ramzi: 'I think I feel like an international person now. You know borders are just geographical lines. It's like I see the world as a whole entity and differences make us unique, instead of hindering the bonding process they just make it enjoyable. I can go anywhere now without stressing out or being threatened by all what is different' (SSI 2, R4. 20/03/2017)

Overall, students felt more international after their experience abroad as a result of their exposure to diversities and learning not only about the host culture, but also about different cultures and countries through their people. Diversity became cherished and students were keen to represent their culture to others and feed their intercultural curiosity through interactions and observation. Students were involved in cultural events where they wore Algerian outfits and cooked Algerian meals. The observations made revealed that students' attitudes were a combination of pride in the original identity and willingness to embrace the novelties and appreciate the diversities.

5.5.2. Between Cultural Identity Maintenance and Intercultural Identity Development

During their sojourning experience, students' feelings, actions, and perceptions were deeply rooted within their cultural identifications. Hence, stereotypes that they held, their perceptions of others, their expectations from others stemmed in their deeply rooted identity. While coming to the UK, students were immersed in a different sociocultural environment where they realized they had to accommodate to the change in order to live an enriching cultural experience. The following data analysis section illustrates that students' adjustment to novelties was not to the detriment of their original cultural identity, but done through embracing the change, adding novelties to their register, introducing their culture and being introduced to the host culture through its people with whom they could later identify.

Data revealed that during the study abroad programme, students seemed to have largely retained their pride with essential attributes to their cultural and national identity components, and at the same time, they embraced the diversity accompanied with their sociocultural immersion. Wassim expressed that while he was in the UK, differences and diversities made him feel challenged at first and he was seeking to assert his identity through his in-group co-nationals. However, with time, and after contact, active engagement, and observations he declared that:

Wassim: 'I am here to learn about the cultures, (...) I am more confident now and I am even keen to represent my culture and country here to those who know so little about us, and at the same time learning about them and am even taking some nice things from their daily living like organization of their daily routine (...)' (SSI 2, R3. 11/02/2017)

It appeared that Wassim's vicissitudes of perceptions followed a dynamic process from starting with stereotyping the culture and fearing threatened by differences, to appreciating diversity, rising self and other awareness.

Wassim tried to assert his identity while at the same time adapt to the norms and demands of the host culture.

Another example which illustrates well the willingness to embrace the change accompanied with holding to the original values is of Farah. She reported:

Farah: *' I am not saying that I feel English, but I feel that I am adapting to life style here (...) I can take from culture and social way of life without being English. I have my values and principles that I got from my culture that will always be here. At first, I was overthinking my cultural experience here and feeling that the difference gap is so wide I better stay with my group and avoid mingling as I will never be understood. But I changed now and I am enjoying the experience better'*
(SSI 8, R3. 16/02/2017)

One can observe through this text how positively valued elements of the foreign culture can be integrated into the sojourner identity. Farah, like some other students, managed to negotiate her place in between cultures and where she belonged. He adapted to English traits, spoke the language, and broadened her cultural knowledge without relinquishing her essential Algerian cultural attributes that she personified. Students attempted to integrate some of the English features into their cultural identity without altering their values as Farah emphasized.

Farah and Wassim's experiences resonated with most other students who reported that they felt that their original identity strengthened as they developed a deeper understanding of themselves through the others and through differences encountered. The experience abroad helped students broaden their world-views and horizons and transformed them into culturally aware individuals and culminated a rich cultural identity with the hybridity and flexibility that paved the way to the effective development of intercultural identity.

5.5.3. Embracing Intercultural Diversities

This code analysis relates to the second research question aiming to display the behaviors and perceptions associated with students' intercultural identity development during their sojourning experience. It illustrates how students shifted from being threatened by cultural diversity and feeling the necessity to assert their identity to understanding and appreciating differences to better cope with the novelties of the host culture.

Data gathered towards the end of the study abroad program, drew attention to the students' strong attachment to their original identity and values while trying to adapt and embrace different sociocultural changes and diversities. Compared to data gathered at the beginning of their experience in the UK, it is noticeable that students developed an identity characterized by confidence, openness, acceptance, and flexibility. To illustrate this statement, what follows is an example of a claim Farah made regarding how she moved from feeling threatened by differences at the beginning of her experience, to being more confident in her values and identity and what she believed in.

Farah explained in one of the interviews that she felt threatened by all the social, cultural and religious diversities and thought that the only way to fit in was to go beyond the original cultural values and the norms by which she abides to fully assimilate to the host environment culture. She reported:

Farah: 'I have the feeling that if I want to fit in fully, I have to go to bars and night clubs, dance and drink, date others and do whatever they do here. Some things are great like order outside people queue and respect one another, they take their work very seriously...but other things are not acceptable socially and religiously back home' (SSI 8, R1. 05/12/2017).

Farah, during the first days of her experience in the UK, was confronted with the common belief among Algerians that socialization is done in pubs, fun is around clubs and that her 'Algerianity' is at risk since adaptation for her meant assimilation. Hence, to find some comfort, she restricted her intercultural engagement to the academic setting or student-led events at university facilities, and spent more time doing activities with her fellow Algerian students. However, by the end of the experience, data showed a leap forward in Farah's attitude towards differences and perceptions of others. Through taking part in different activities outside her academic setting, and engaging with people from different cultural spheres, Farah emphasized that she wanted to remain culturally the same (traditions, values, beliefs, and way of life) but at the same time embrace the novelties and adjust to the social norms and cultural values to become member of a new society. She asserted:

Farah: *'I guess am fitting quiet well. I mean it's true that at first, I was reluctant, and I was careful not to be dragged by the new way of life, but I lived it without withdrawing from my original identity. For example, I can go to bars and not drink. Even more now I am more aware of the differences and similarities between us and them and am gladly introducing others to my culture'* (EI 8, R4. 03/04/2017)

Farah's perceptions about the host culture changed as she understood the new cultural norms and daily routines and habits. She became accustomed to the sociocultural life of the host environment. Her intercultural understanding led her to be socially active and engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds without having the urge to assert her identity or feel threatened by differences.

Similar to Farah's comment, Youcef explained that the more he was actively engaged within the new host environment, the better he could accommodate to the demands of the new culture. He said that having friends from different cultures and sharing opinions and perspectives with the ability to overcome the fear of being judged contributed in his feeling of 'sociocultural comfort' He asserted:

Youcef: ' *At first differences triggered the willingness to defend my culture and my views as if I was attacked, it was so silly (laugh) now I am introducing others to my country and culture. I have adjusted to life here, I am more organized and work hard to take advantage of my weekends to have fun, and I have been invited to different parties and even a late Christmas celebration with a group of British, German, and Polish friends*' (SSI 4, R2)

To sum up with, students' intercultural experience granted them a diversified ground to be active participants of a new different sociocultural system where they were influenced by contact with the culture and the new cultural groups. This active intercultural membership entailed some cultural and individual changes. The former was noticed in their developed ability to adjust to the new culture not to the detriment of their original one, while the latter was clear in their capability to encompass the feeling of being judged by others. Students displayed their cultural identity and introduced their culture to the ones who knew little about it.

5.5.4. Broadening the Worldview

The ability of students to be critical of their values and attitudes towards themselves and others was very important in their intercultural development. Data analysed in this section displays their willingness to open up to diverse cultural values in the host sociocultural environment.

Data revealed that being immersed in the UK led students to reflect on their own culture and their everyday cultural experiences in the host culture. Such transitional perspective enabled them to be more appreciative of their own cultural traditions and values. Over half of students reported that their understanding of the host culture improved and that their stereotypes were misleading (Farah, EI8, R3.17/2/2017; Hanan, EI6, R3.15/2/2017; Youcef, EI4, R3. 10/1/2017). Students developed a multi-cultural consciousness garnered from their attempt to connect with local and international students and engage in various sociocultural

activities in the host city and university. Research results also showed that all students believed that they possessed better knowledge of the host culture by the end of their experience, and they understood better the similarities and differences between the host environment's culture and their original one.

Most of the interview participants during their fourth month into the experience of studying abroad reported that life in England was quite individualistic and lonely. However, being alone provided them with the time and space to reflect upon the cultural unfamiliarity they encountered and reflect on their own values and behaviors once home and while abroad. For example, Farah reported:

Farah: *'The understanding of the different cultures is of a great help to my intercultural development. What I have learned here through being exposed to people and culture could never be learned at universities through curriculum. Without this experience I wouldn't have opened to diversities. It made me look at things from different perspectives and take deep reflection on things while before I rather had instant judgmental attitude'* (SSI 8, R4. 05/04/2017)

The sense of understanding different worldviews and cultural perspectives helped Farah and other students enhance not only their intercultural understanding about diversities but also develop a deeper and rational understanding of what being Algerian means. Farah's intercultural knowledge constructed through her observations, interactions, and encounters led her to develop a good understanding about the culture and diversities enabling her to be a less judgmental, more confident, and tolerant individual. The sojourning experience in the UK granted her an enriching intercultural experiential learning opportunity rather than a superficial theoretical one. The latter was reported as being '*less culturally informative*' (Omar, SSI1, R2), '*not very helpful in the host culture adjustment process*' (Sara, SSI 7, R3.16/2/2017), and '*sometimes misleading*' (Ramzi, IE 3, R3.15/2/2017).

Wassim also reported that university courses would never help in gaining insights on different cultures as immersion did. He showed appreciation of the experience as it helped him develop his awareness and introduced him to diversities at the same time as he was deeply reflecting on his own culture. He said:

Wassim: *'(...) we are a collectivist society and we do value the other and think about him that's why you find us very welcoming, friendly, and also respectful. For example, kissing or drinking is not done in public because religiously drinking is a sin but also out of respect. While here no one cares about what anyone thinks (...) I came to understand and cope with a lot of things here with no problem at all unlike when I first came'* (SSI2, R3. 11/02/2017)

Wassim's identification of self and the experience of handling the challenge of differences of perceptions, beliefs, and ways of living enabled him to learn to accept intercultural differences. Wassim moved from being intimidated by differences, stereotypical, and afraid from others' expectations to being open, understanding, and able to adapt to the new environment.

All in all, this data analysis section illustrated that the students' intercultural constructed knowledge through their immersion experience in the UK gradually changed their perceptions and behaviors. Students developed an intercultural identity characterized by flexibility, openness, adaptability, understanding, and intercultural curiosity. This contributes in exploring the second research question seeking to clarify behaviors and perceptions associated with intercultural identity development during study abroad programmes.

5.5.5. Increased Self-Confidence

Relocating to another country required students to disconnect from family, support systems, and familiar cultural practices and also to interact with others from different sociocultural backgrounds. For students, the presence of varying cultural systems benefited them in gaining a broader perspective and enhanced their self-confidence as they navigated the challenges that living and studying abroad could entail. This section relates to the second research question as it seeks to investigate whether immersion effects students' perceptions vis a vis diversity. Data excerpts revealed that intercultural immersion helped in the personal development of the students and increased their self-confidence when dealing with challenges of diversities and unfamiliarity.

Ramzi was driven by his intercultural curiosity to engage in a wide variety of social activities and verbal interactions with British and other internationals during his experience in the UK. He asserted that his fear to initiate discussions and discomfort caused by sociocultural differences disappeared as he became willing to actively interact with others and take part in different clubs and societies. His experience made him more confident in the midst of intercultural differences. He declared:

Ramzi: 'This experience provided me with a wider horizon and enabled me to interact with a wide variety of people and access wide range of cultures which is an advantage for my personal development. I now feel more comfortable to approach others, interact, and face what is challenging and different by curiosity rather than intimidation' (EI 3, R4. 26/03/2017)

Confidence gained from the challenges during the study abroad experience and the value of the intercultural knowledge learned through exposure and interaction gained struck at the heart of the students' perception of self and others, views, and ways of living and accommodating to the everyday sociocultural norms. The study abroad

experience became highly appreciated by all students, particularly in terms of their intercultural knowledge construction.

The experience abroad helped students construct an intercultural knowledge and increased their cultural awareness through the experiences of differences. In this line of thought, Youcef declared in an interview the following:

Youcef: 'for me, this is the best experience of my whole life. I have come to know about a part of me, I discovered things about me I didn't know before. I learned to be more confident and learned that I can be accepted by others without changing anything in me, I learned to appreciate people who have the same perspectives as mine and respect the ones who have different views.' (SSI4, R4. 22/03/2017. my translation)

All students expressed their increased self-confidence and positive attitudes in terms of improved communication skills, increased ability to deal with change, and having a more flexible and less judgmental attitude. Amira said that the experience helped her develop her intercultural personality and be more open to and respectful of differences instead of fearing them even if she disagreed with some values and ways of life (Amira EI5, R4.27/03/2017). Similarly, Farah expressed that at the beginning of her experience she always had the differences at the back of her head, but she overcame that phase and believed that differences are not a barrier but a challenge to learn more and develop more (Farah EI 8, R4. 03/04/2017).

This section's data provided evidence of the development of students as well-rounded and interculturally aware individuals. Traits of tolerance, understanding, and intercultural curiosity became part of them helping them develop their confidence and along it their intercultural identity. Data illustrated that active intercultural engagement experiences helped in changing positively students' perceptions and views and led them to better enjoy their experience as interculturally confident individuals.

5.5.6. The Development of Open Mindedness

During their time living abroad, Algerian students undertaking the pre-session programme taken as a case study for this research were faced with different aspects of change on the social and cultural levels (which this study explores mainly). Students were required to operate within a host culture that shares very little similarities with their home culture. According to the data in this section, sociocultural change did not only entail a perfect adaptation and a perfectly displayed open mindedness, but also failure to accept new views and deal with cultural habits and norms.

Open mindedness is about having an open and unprejudiced attitude towards different groups and towards diverse cultural norms and values. During my participants' immersion abroad, data collected through the interviews showed that students' open mindedness developed along the experience. This was noticed through the different ways by which they approached diversities in the beginning of their stay in the UK compared to the end of it. The majority of students showed great improvement in the way they perceived other's views, cultural differences, and interfaith diversities. For example, Farah, was used to little cultural diversity back home and used only one frame of interpretation to grasp small superficial differences that exist in her society and country. Through her immersion and her experiential learning opportunities, she reported that:

Farah: *'This study abroad experience taught me a great deal about myself as a person. I have had the opportunity to interact and engage with other and exchange views and perceptions. I got to see what people think about my culture and what they know about my country. It's like circumstances forced me to become a more open and accepting individual which is actually great. Now am happy to say that I know more about the world and I realize that I did so little before this experience.'* (SSI 8, R4. 05/04/2017)

Although intercultural diversities confused Farah at the beginning of her experience leading to the construction of false prejudices about the host culture and its people, her daily interactions and engagement could help her correct her assumptions and move beyond stereotypes. Farah started to accept what she initially perceived as abnormal. She constructed a better intercultural knowledge, and wider culturally diverse social network. Social practices have helped Farah minimize her confusion and stress and maximize her understanding and adjustment.

Similarly, Ramzi claimed that his daily immersion opportunities granted by the study abroad experience pushed him to interact with others and build good relationships with them. At the beginning of the experience he was reluctant to be the first to start conversations, but through time he constructed an intercultural knowledge which helped him understand that the stereotype that British are asocial and individualistic was overgeneralized (Ethnographic Journal). He declared: *'I got to play and form teams with people from England, Ireland, Germany, France and I value the relationship I have with them now. I learned a great deal about culture and everyday life from them'* (EI 3, R4. 26/03/2017)

Ramzi described that his own growth and learning while abroad was mainly through socialization. His knowledge building through seeking information from out-group members helped him gain an attitude characterized by acceptance and respect of differences. Subjects which were to him, and all students, seen as taboo and wrong (e.g., drinking, LGBT, and showing affection in public) started to be accepted as part of the other culture way of life.

5.5.7. The Case of Intercultural Regress

It would be too utopian if one assumes that every student went through the same experience and displayed the same results of open-mindedness and tolerance alongside the intensive intercultural engagement and communication. An illustration which supports this claim is the one of Amira. In an interview during her 19th week into the experience, Amira stated that the host culture's norms, values, and beliefs are *'too open and don't go with how we were brought up and seem just wrong at times'* (EI 5, R3. 15/02/2017).

During her experience in the UK, Amira endured what she interpreted as racist acts which made her withdraw from social activities and interactions. Due to her experiences, she held on to the belief that the sociocultural environment is hostile and unwelcoming. In an interview during her second week she declared:

Amira: *'I had a totally different idea about UK. Tolerant, accepting diversities, and respecting personal freedoms but instead am being ill-treated, people are rude, disrespectful. And my head scarf is an alarming thing to them, it triggers hate'* (SSI 5, R1. 02/12/2016)

The student claimed that she came eager, motivated, and willing to learn about differences but felt shut down since her first days. Through the passage of days into the experience, Amira's friends tried to convince her to forget about her bad experiences and go out to mingle with others. However, her fear of going through the same experiences continued to hinder her willingness to socialize even after over 6 weeks into the experience;

Amira: *'As much as I want to go out and engage in activities and talk to people, I am afraid to face the same things. I know I should take the most of this experience and learn through*

people and learn about the culture, but nothing can guarantee that it would go well.' (SSI 5, R2. 06/01/2017)

Amira barely had contact with others outside her academic sphere (mainly teachers and staff members) and joined only an event for the Muslim community in which she felt a bit at ease as she shared the same religious identity with people from different cultural backgrounds. She was continuously seeking a common ground to assert her cultural identity or part of it.

The attitude of open mindedness is essential to move from initial cultural awareness to understanding and accepting sociocultural diversities. Through her experience abroad, Amira did not engage in building a knowledge through listening to information provided by others. Instead, she continuously sought to assert her identity and remain within her in-group (Algerians). Her daily exposure to diversity and information was very limited and restricted to the academic environment which resulted in a continuous feeling of unacceptance and rejection of diversities. Amira could not open up to others, overcome her feelings of being judged and unwelcomed, and felt homesick until the last day of her experience abroad.

5.5.8. Summary of Theme 4

To sum up, this theme provided insights which can help in answering the second research question seeing to investigate the main behaviors and perception related to the development of intercultural identity during the study abroad experience in a diversified cultural context. Initially, students started the experience culturally unprepared with a very superficial knowledge and misleading beliefs and stereotypes about the host culture and people. Students went through stress, confusion, intimidation, and fear of judgment while trying to construct a solid knowledge about others and about cultural diversity and various sociocultural norms and values. After a considerable time abroad, students engaged in the sociocultural life and built up an intercultural understanding which helped them better cope with differences. Students could adjust to the host culture and showed great sensitivity, openness, confidence, and tolerance which are traits of an intercultural identity. However, intercultural exposure accompanied with the absence of pre-departure preparedness, in-programme guidance, converged with psychological predispositions resulted in some students' withdrawal and separation and hindered their intercultural identity development.

5.6. Summary of Chapter 5

In this chapter, I looked into the participants' intercultural learning experiences through exploring their knowledge construction through observation and socialization in the new sociocultural milieu. I also looked into the challenges faced during their immersion and how students overcame them as well as changes in their perceptions and identity development. The themes presented in this chapter emerged from the analysis of students' interviews, and my research ethnographic observations.

During the analysis, there has been a focus on the contextual influence on the intercultural knowledge construction locating the research within the social constructionism paradigm. Different factors were highlighted as influencers of the students' intercultural identity development such as the context (inside vs outside academic institutions), intensity of the intercultural interactions, diversity of the social network, and the personality of students and their attitudes and perceptions towards differences. The analysis also revealed coping strategies students used to minimize the stress and confusion accompanied with the confrontation with sociocultural diversities, racism, and pressure to meet the new culture's demands.

Through exploring the participants' reactions and perceptions of differences during an intensive six months period, I was able to account for similarities and differences regarding attitude change, coping strategies, and believes from one student to another, and the role of intercultural knowledge construction in the development of intercultural identities. My finding adds up to the existing knowledge by tackling a case study that has never been taken before: Algerian students. Mainly this research analysis came up with the following major findings:

- Students came culturally unprepared, and their study abroad experience served mainly to help them construct their intercultural knowledge.
- Students' intercultural immersion and cultural understanding could have been more effective if it was academically and socially guided.
- Intercultural interactions helped students alter their previous views and perceptions regarding diversity.
- Data showed differences in the students' adaptation process
- Intercultural experiential learning helped students develop an intercultural identity reflected in behavioral and cognitive change, and the ability to categorize with more than one cultural group.

The findings and their significance will be discussed in broader terms in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusion

6.1. Introduction to Chapter 6

Literature on study abroad programmes is limited, and the experiences of Algerian students abroad not investigated. Therefore, the essential goal of this study was to discover the potential of intercultural exposure on identity transformation of Algerian students who have never been immersed in a culture other than their original. The study aims at unfolding the factors fostering or impeding intercultural identity development, the perceptions and behaviours associated with it, and the means that can be followed to facilitate its development during the study abroad experience.

The present final chapter of the thesis will draw together the discussion and provide answers to the research questions. It will be set out as follows. First, I will discuss students' experiential learning throughout their sojourning experience, intercultural encounters, intercultural identity, and the ways in which the knowledge accumulated through experiences influenced later their perceptions, emotions, intercultural exchange and the process of adaptability. I will compare and contrast the findings of my own research with the existing research literature, in order to highlight my own contribution to the field of knowledge. Second, I will address the barriers of intercultural identity development as displayed by the findings. Next, I will answer the research questions and provide an overview of the finding following the research theoretical framework. Following that, research and policy implications will be provided. Finally, the thesis will end with research limitations and recommendations for future research.

6.2. Experiential Intercultural Learning

Learning through sociocultural engagement helped students construct an intercultural knowledge which contributed to broadening their frames of interpretation and understanding of others' behaviours, beliefs, and cultural practices. The experience of taking part in a 6 months study abroad programme provided participants with opportunities for experiential learning outside the educational context. In their residential setting, students engaged in contact during their 'free time', meals, sharing domestic duties, social events, shopping...etc. All the opportunities of informal exchange with others offered learning opportunities about how others behave and think in similar contexts and circumstances. This section relates to the first research question unfolding the main factors (amongst experiential learning) influencing the development of intercultural identity.

The involvement of students in the host site's social life and cultural activities is seen to constitute forms of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) as participants were learning through the experiences of taking part in different groups and engaging practically with other from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. According to the research findings, students' experiential intercultural learning consisted of a process where participants undergone different sociocultural experiences, reflected upon them, and developed new understandings that they applied to future novel situations. The findings of my study are consonant with the classic work done by Kolb (1984) reflecting the students' experiential learning process. This process has been tackled in the review of the literature (chapter 2) as part of intercultural learning through experience and exposure granted by study abroad programmes. The process is summarised in figure 14 (p.225) below. This latter depicts a cyclic pattern where students reflected and made sense of their experiences. This reflection enabled them to draw conclusions that they could later apply to other sociocultural practices.

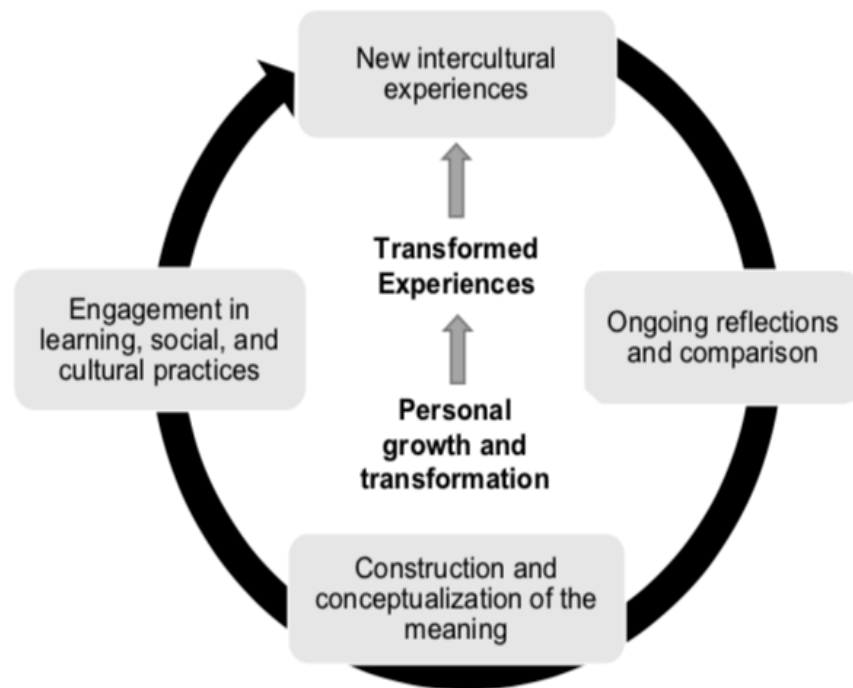


Figure 14. Kolb and Fry, 1975; Kolb, 1984 in Gill (2007, p. 178)

Participants' intercultural learning and reflection were evidence of meaning construction and intercultural development. The data analysed and presented in chapter five (research results) suggested that the process of reflection, comparison and meaning making helped students in understanding their sociocultural experiences. In this vein, findings resonate with what the social identity theory establishes as a social comparison. That is, participants' sociocultural reflections and comparisons captured different social characteristics that pushed them to establish an organisational system to place themselves within the new host social and cultural environment (see theme 1, p. 151).

Aligning with the stream of thought of Bennett (1993) and Paige (1993), the research results also indicate that students' active social and cultural participation and communication helped them understand cultural diversities and acknowledge the existence of a variety of cultural systems and understand others' behaviours and perceptions. That was illustrated in

the data analysis which revealed students' construction of intercultural knowledge through engaging in social experiences that helped altering their perceptions, overcome the cultural stereotypes, and understand new cultural norms and connotations (see theme 3, p. 177).

In general, cultural exposure granted by the study abroad programme helped students overcome the barriers of misunderstandings and develop a more tolerant attitude towards cultural diversities. Findings reflecting students' intercultural knowledge construction through sociocultural practices echo Burr's (1995) statement positing that the understanding of the world is socially constructed through discourse and social practices.

During their experience in the UK, students were faced with a novel intercultural exposure that pushed them to display new response to situations of confusion and misunderstanding. Students' experiences exposed them to different aspects of the British sociocultural life leading them to learn some of the new cultural practices and replace old behaviours by new ones in order to accommodate to the new context. Data analysed showed that students mainly reported aspects of queuing, differences in the traffic organisation, respect of the traffic lights, non-tactile verbal contact, no use of titles and surnames, and social drinking as a result of their initial contact with the host environment. Students became aware of the need to seek harmony with the new environment through adopting new behaviours in response to the new social habits and demands. Learning new social habits and cultural patterns is what Kim (2001) referred to as acculturation as opposed to deculturation which refers to the unlearning of some of the old cultural elements as part of the cross-cultural adaptability process. However, it is worth mentioning that students reported that their accommodation to the new cultural site did not entail the loss of their original identity but rather adding to it. This will be further discussed within the intercultural identity development section in this chapter.

It was argued by several scholars that study abroad programmes represented a social and cultural exposure learning venue for students to develop interculturally (Williams, 2005; Sodnomdarjaa, 2006; Gacel-Avila, 2005; Grove & Torbiorn, 1993; Kauffman, 2012). The opportunities of experiential intercultural learning provided by the programme and intercultural knowledge and skills developed by participants seem to align with this claim. The programme helped students develop knowledge of different cultural aspects, providing them with opportunities to explore their values and those of the others and reflect upon them.

6.2.1. Intercultural Encounters

Data analysis exhibited that the students' intercultural exposure had positive effects on their cultural perspectives. Students, mostly, displayed a change in their previously held stereotypes regarding the host culture and its people. Participants posited that most of their pre-existing cultural knowledge was derived from the media. During the data collection, they were encouraged to share their impressions and perceptions of the new culture and society. Common responses revolved around sophisticated and refined manners, tea parties, culturally diverse environment, tolerant of religious and cultural diversities, individualistic and introvert, rigid and cold.

Through their experience of engagement and contact, students did not only change their previously negative stereotypes, but constructed new views as well. Data showed that students came to see that British are helpful, kind, and friendly rather than rigid and uncaring. Students reported that their interactions helped them see the true characteristics of others and understand different cultural norms and values (see theme 3, p 177-192). Nonetheless, other students (Amira among the research participants and other Algerian students who were part of the cohort but not part of the sample) reported their deception in the cultural environment as they came to realise that their ideas of it were over idealised (see code 5.5.7, p. 173).

Intercultural encounters represented a chance for students to develop their culture-general knowledge involving different elements that constituted the cultural environment. Participant intercultural contact helped them locate differences and similarities between them and the others and between their culture and the cultures of the others. Students' comparison and reflections led to an understanding that helped them to categorise with other based on shared personal and universal notions rather than sociocultural and religious diversities. Intercultural contact helped students move beyond the rigid tight boundaries of their cultural identity and try to build social networks and relations as a coping strategy within the host environment (see code 5.4.2, p. 173). Students' responses and research observations displayed students' flexibility and intercultural awareness regarding the importance of building social ties in understanding the culture and adapting to its diversities.

Data discussed in chapter five displayed that the study abroad programme represented a ground for intercultural learning through engaging students in sociocultural activities and contacts. However, it is worth pointing that not all of the students had the same drive to interact and curiosity to learn about other. Amira was one of the students who did not engage in intercultural contact outside her in-group and academic setting. The reasons behind this were already highlighted in the analysis as pertaining to her experiences of racism, which pushed her to build new biases and stereotypes of the British as being '*intolerant, harsh, and rude to those who are different*' (Amira, ethnographic journal 23/02/2017). Amira highlighted that her intercultural contact took mainly place with university staff (see code 5.4.7.1, p 190-191). University was considered as a safe place for Amira unlike the outside streets that she associated with unacceptance and bad treatment.

The reader will remember that this research has excluded the academic context from the study because classes did not implement a cultural element. Students reported several times that they did not learn much about the host cultural environment within the academic context (p. 192). They mainly linked that to the fact of being placed within study groups of

Algerian students only, and having their teachers trying to prove their understanding of the Algerian culture rather than teaching them about the host culture. Data led me to categorise those reason as some of the main barriers to students' intercultural knowledge construction and understanding during their study abroad programme experience.

The present research findings showed that continuous informal contact outside the academic context helped students to gain interactional confidence. Students' fluency in English granted them entrance to a culturally different speech community (see code 5.4.5, p. 182). Students reported their feeling of stress stemming from both the lack of confidence in their language competence, and the ignorance of others' expectations during the contact experience. Data revealed that continuous interactional experiences helped students boost their communicative confidence and hence engage in more interactional experiences with other.

Data revealed that intercultural encounters represented a very important factor that influenced students' intercultural learning. Contact with others changed students' stereotypes and helped them move beyond cultural identification of us/them to build social bonds with other and categorise with different groups based on shared passions, human notions, and interests. Students looked at members of the host community as individuals rather than members of a specific group. This echoes what Kim has established as the basis of the development of intercultural identity (individualization & universalization). Hence, students developed through intercultural contact, exposure, and learning an intercultural identity that helped them move beyond group favouritism and group categorisation. Data reflected that identity is built within the social realm and is formed through exchanges with members of the host culture. This relates to what the communicative theory of identity establishes as the relational layer of identity and the importance of social exchange on identity formation.

It is worth mentioning that exposure to cultural diversity did not result in the loss of the sense of identity as a result of other's perception and behaviours (see code 5.5.2, p. 180). Students (7/8) reported that they

gained a deeper understanding of their original identity and developed their mind-set from being cultural to intercultural through their intercultural learning and exposure. Amira, however, continuously asserted her original cultural identity and developed new negative views and stereotypes. This was reflected in Amira's behaviour across group boundaries and her withdrawal from social contact. Amira's experiences of racism led her to build the

cultural bias of the other as being racist, unsensitive, and disrespectful. These biases accompanied with the absence of cultural resourcefulness and intercultural knowledge caused stress and anxiety and led to a loss of sense of belonging to any other group except the one of her co-nationals. This aligns with what the communicative theory of identity posits as the influence of other's perceptions on the personal identity and helps in understanding the impact of others' behaviours and perceptions on the students' avowed identity. Nonetheless, it can be said that intercultural contact was able to both effect intercultural identity's development and regression.

6.3. Identity: From Resistance to Development

During their intercultural exposure experience in the UK, all participants reported that they experienced some changes in their lives mostly concerning their attitudes and personality. Throughout their sojourn abroad, students were driven by strong academically oriented investment as well as a desire to adjust to the host environment and become part of other intercultural host community social networks. Hence, students tried to invest in their intercultural development by trying to understand how they could adapt and construct ties with others over time and space.

Intercultural exposure granted participants entrance to a diverse cultural environment and speech community. Students were privileged to be fluent speakers of English and gained confidence in language use through repeated interactions. After a considerable time in the host society, data provided insights into the change of students' attitudes vis-à-vis

diversities, and how they displayed a more flexible and interculturally transformed identity. Students tended to strongly assert their cultural identity and emphasise that exposure to diversity would not change their identity. Students adopted a very compulsive and defensive attitude towards anyone who talked to them about religious and cultural diversities. For example, it was highlighted in the data discussed in chapter 5, that during the initial days into the experience students displayed the continuous need to assert their original identity and refusal to change their behaviours and values.

Students' responses to diversity showed a strong attachment to the original identity and the fear of identity loss. However, the intercultural experience helped students grow personally and culturally. Participants (7/8) did not withdraw and give up when faced with intercultural struggles during the first weeks of their experience abroad, on the contrary, they faced them with determination and awareness of the need to overcome them so as to develop an intercultural identity, which was important to adjust to the new society and adapt to the new cultural norms and social habits.

Students' intercultural transformation illustrated in identity development confirms what the three theories (Communicative Theory of Identity, the Social Identity Theory, and the Communicative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation) upon which this research is built posit: identity is fluid and changeable and build within the social realm through social exchange and practices. Data showed that identities are dynamic and site of multiple struggles. It was through the struggles that students became culturally aware and grew to be intercultural persons (see theme 4, p. 204). The continuous interactional and exposure experiences represented a challenging learning environment for students.

This study shows that the study abroad experience led students to a personal growth and intercultural transformation echoing findings of previous studies positing that study abroad effect the students' intercultural transformation and expansion of cultural identity (e.g. Adler,

1975; Taylor, 1994). Intercultural learning experiences required students to constantly compare and reflect on their beliefs and identities leading them to alter certain behaviours and change perceptions so as to adjust and develop their cultural maturity and form an intercultural identity. However, not all of the students passed by the same process. As previously highlighted in the literature, Amira experienced a regressive rather than progressive cultural growth. Until the end of her experience abroad, Amira felt a strong attachment to home (p.217). This yearning towards Algeria, especially towards the end of her sojourn, is understood as an inability and lack of real interest in adapting to the new cultural contexts. Over time, Amira's sphere of subjectivity, namely her thoughts, emotions and experiences accompanied with a limited intercultural knowledge and absence of orientation, led her to seek a comforting cultural zone within her group of co-national, where she could "feel herself". Hence, instead of persisting and seeking opportunities to engage with others and establish a new sociocultural routine, Amira preferred to turn onto a safer path where her identity could make her feel in a firmer position of control and clarity.

Overall, data illustrated that students developed a new sense of self, and new acquired competencies that made them feel part of a new sociocultural environment. This socialisation process made it possible for them to draw upon different social and cultural resources to develop an intercultural identity or personhood that strives to embrace divergent cultural elements into something unique and new (Kim, 2008). Hence, the new intercultural identity is different from the Algerian original one inherited within their original and only sociocultural environment. The new intercultural identity is analectic, reflective and can neutralize opposing constructs of different cultures and bring them together so as to function adequately within the realm of diversities.

6.4. Outcomes of Intercultural Transformation

The following section discusses the students' intercultural transformation resulting from exposure and contact. Intercultural transformation was a long process of trial and error. Findings are discussed and compared to previous research literature dealing with adaptability and interculturality during study abroad programmes. Discussion of the students' intercultural transformation relates to changes in their behaviours and perceptions, and how these changes reflect their intercultural identity development (RQ2).

6.4.1. Intercultural Sensitivity

The qualitative data gathered focused on the students' perceptions and opinions about cultural differences and their perception of the host cultural environment and its people since their initial days in the host culture till the end of their 6 months sojourning experience. The responses given at different intervals of time were then compared to account for students' responses to cultural differences and perceptions. The analysis of the gathered data focused on areas where the development or regression were noticeable. Intercultural sensitivity here refers to the students' ability to develop positive emotions towards understanding and appreciating differences and adjusting or altering the behaviour in a way that indicates respect and acceptance (see theme 4, p. 204-215).

The reader will remember that the literature review chapter (chapter 2) tackled Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity as a scale to measure the development of the students' intercultural sensitivity. Following a qualitative research strategy, this study tried to capture the process students went by to reach a stage of acceptance to diversities and adjustment of their responses to meet the requirements for effective intercultural contact experiences. Data showed that students' responses to intercultural novelty and diversity differed and changed throughout experiences of exposure and interaction. Their responses became more filled with concrete experiences which reflected the importance of intercultural exposure in developing sensitivity as very

important factor leading to adaptability and intercultural identity development.

Data analysis reflected that students experienced different stages before they were able to shift their perceptions and adjust their behaviours in accordance to the cultural norms and social demands. Students experiences the four different stages starting with 1/ denial which was the first stage that took place when encountering differences where students displayed a high level of ethnocentrism. This was followed by 2/ defence during which students reported constant confusion due to the lack of cultural preparedness and resourcefulness. Following that came 3/ minimalization which was a phase characterised mainly by students' acceptance of diversities and the shifted focus from sociocultural differences to universal and human similarities. Finally, 4/ acceptance was the final stage towards the end of the experience abroad where students started adjusting their behaviours and altering their perceptions of others and respect their values.

Students' responses in the acceptance stage of the model (Figure 1: Bennett's (1993) Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, p.64) revealed that they were aware of the cultural differences and that they went beyond superficial observations to actual learning and understanding of others. Students engaged in more intercultural contact and communication experiences with others which led them to develop a high level of socio-pragmatic awareness as they were building and strengthening bonds across cultures. Participants displayed respect and empathy and did not stay focused on their personal problems that they faced during the first stages of their ethnocentric mindset. However, according to the data, the study abroad experience influenced the students' intercultural mindset to different extents and in different ways. Claiming that all students go through the same stages described in Bennett's model (1993) which end up in acceptance and intercultural sensitivity is a bit reductionist and over simplistic. For example, Amira did not develop an ethnorelative mindset and the experience of exposure did not contribute to her intercultural development. Instead, due to some personal predispositions and contextual

factors, Amira decided to withdraw from the cultural life and restrict her study abroad experience to academic gains. At the end of the programme, Amira emphasised her lack of interest in the cultural milieu due to her feeling of rejection and opted to remain within her in-group where she felt comfortable.

It is important to acknowledge that intercultural exposure is a very challenging process that needs preparation and resourcefulness even before engaging in the experience. Students' confusion and ignorance of what to expect is a prove of that need and necessity. Data displayed that residence in the host country per se does not entail automatically the development of intercultural sensitivity and adaptability. Theories that aim to describe the smooth steady development of students' intercultural competencies need to take into account the personal, psychological, and environmental factors that may support the students' intercultural development or hinder it. This section of the discussion highlighted that intercultural exposure helped in the development of behaviours and competencies associated with intercultural identity (RQ2), and that there was need for intercultural preparedness and guidance in order to help students develop interculturality during the study abroad experience (RQ3).

6.4.2. Intercultural Awareness

According to the data, studying abroad helped the majority of students to broaden their horizons and construct an intercultural knowledge that helped them to develop their intercultural awareness based on the understanding of the new site and others who are different (see code 5.5.4, p.210) . Gaining new perspectives seemed to be an inevitable outcome of the study abroad experience felt by most participants. Ramzi's comment was typical of most of the students' comment on their exposure experience in terms of gaining new knowledge, skills, and perspectives. He reported that he felt that his mind-set had changed and that the way in which he operated changed as well. He declared that his understanding developed along with his cultural curiosity. He added that *'Even if we are not able to*

fully integrate the society, at least we can understand things from their point of view.' (Ramzi, SSI 3, R3, 13/02/2017)

Developing intercultural awareness was not an automatic or a passive process, it involved going beyond the observational phase to engagement, interaction, reflection, and comparison. Data reflected that during the initial days of the experience, students faced confusion, sense of loss, and stress due to the inability to understand diversities. Students had one frame of reference (Algerian sociocultural frame) that they used to interpret others' differences and perceptions. It was only through experiences of contact that students were able to get involved in an empathetic movement from their own frame of reference to a new stance. Participants who were not experiencing intercultural contact and social exchange with others displayed the development of new cultural biases, constant homesickness, stress, sadness, and withdrawal. Amira, among many other students who did belong to my research case study sample, displayed all the mentioned emotions and behaviours. Data analysed from her interview responses during her experience reflected her regression rather than progression and inability to develop intercultural awareness due to the absence of engagement and contact with others.

The present research's findings confirmed what scholars (Byram, 1997; Williams, 2005) previously established as very important to the development of intercultural awareness: intercultural knowledge developed through exposure and communication. The overall theoretical framework upon which this research is based helped in understanding the process by which students go through to gain an intercultural awareness through experiences of exchange and interaction. The stress-adaptation-growth theory posits that full social immersion helps in reaching adaptability through learning some new cultural patterns and behaviours (acculturation), engaging in contact to construct an intercultural knowledge that would contribute to intercultural growth, intercultural transformation, and psychological fitness within the new host cultural environment. Findings echoed what Kim's theory posits regarding the role

of intercultural exposure in the development of intercultural identity. However, this research also goes to add that intercultural exposure can entail a learning regression under contextual and psychological factors, unwillingness to socialise, and absence of intercultural resourcefulness.

6.4.3. Towards Intercultural Adaptability

Data showed that during the initial period of the study abroad programme, the participants' affective reactions and appraisals of the new sociocultural environment were diverse and mixed. During their first round of interviews, students displayed anxiety, self-doubt, stress, confusion, and home sickness. Only one student (Ramzi) displayed excitement and willingness to learn and intercultural curiosity since the initial phase of the experience. Mostly, students were aware of their emotional and psychological state of discomfort and reported that they were neither prepared to face diversities nor guided during their experience.

Throughout the experience abroad, students shared the belief that it was essential to learn to adapt to the new environment in order to maximise the positive outcomes of their exposure experience. This awareness of the need to adapt led them to develop different adjustment strategies. Mainly, students tried to construct an intercultural knowledge that helped them interpret adequately others' behaviours, and the host culture's norms and values. Some students developed social routines that helped them feel part of more than one cultural group. For example, Farah, Wassim, Omar, and Ramzi joined different sports groups that made them feel as part of a team. This teaming-up helped students develop a sense of belonging which was very important in adapting to the new environment. Their interculturality and adaptability were progressing rapidly as they were more engaged in intercultural contact, group activities, and had more cultural learning resources than other participants (see theme 3, p.177).

Other students reported that they felt they changed culturally when they started to communicate with others and attend different student led

activities and cultural nights. These students were more reserved, shy, and introvert and needed some guidance in order to start socializing and interacting with other. Youcef, Sara, and Farah attended some social events around the city and campus to which they were invited. They reported that the events helped the initiate intercultural contact with others. Such contact led to the development of friendships and the nesting of a large culturally diverse social network.

Moving into a new cultural environment entailed the constant awareness of participants of the need to adapt and alter their perceptions and behaviours. They emphasised that respectful and accepting attitudes were very important in developing interculturality and reaching adaptability. Interactions with others from diverse cultural backgrounds generally and local community members specifically, have been identified as significant in helping in the socio-cultural adaptation. Data showed that adaptation varied from one student to another and was mainly influenced by environmental factors, resourcefulness, coping styles, personality, and intercultural communication. These factors were also stated by Bennett (1993). Moreover, echoing what Kim's theory of cross-cultural adaptability (2001) posits, students' continuous trials to achieve a balance between their internal connections and external conditions led them to go through a process of knowledge construction, acculturation, and intercultural transformation with all its ups and downs to reach a sociocultural fit within the new environment. However, this strive to develop interculturality and adjust to new cultural context did not engender the loss of the original identity but an extension of their identity from being mono-cultural to intercultural.

Adaptability can be supported by academic support (Kim, 2001). The research findings confirmed that in a reversed manner. Data revealed that students' absence of intercultural resources (access to sources of intercultural guidance and information) that could be offered through pre-departure and in-programme cultural guidance resulted in confusion and a hard and challenging intercultural learning and adaptability process. This was especially clear with students who were introverted, shy, or the ones

who experienced ill-treatment from the host community members. It was evident through the data that intercultural preparedness and in-programme guidance could help students familiarise more with the host culture, alter their overidealized expectations, get the support needed for their settlement and sociocultural engagement. Hence, intercultural preparedness and guidance play an important role in facilitating the students' intercultural identity development (RQ3).

6.4.4. Group Categorisation

Data revealed that relocation to a new sociocultural environment entailed social identification, categorisation, and comparison across group boundaries. In the midst of cultural diversity, students felt confused and the sense of belonging needed to be established in order to construct a positive social identity. According to the research findings, initially, all participants started comparing the unfamiliarity around them with the culture, traditions, and way of life they have been accustomed to since childhood. The discomfort and stress that sociocultural differences engendered was due to the absence of similar characteristics that could form a basis for students to identify with others who are different from them. Consequently, going back to their in-group of co-nationals was a strategy through which participants asserted their identity and installed the feeling of belonging to something so as to establish feelings of safety, social comfort, and psychological health (see theme 2, p.157).

Mostly, at the beginning of their experience abroad, students opted for separation from the others as a coping strategy. Their lack of confidence, fear of rejection (rejecting before being rejected), poor social interactions, confusion, and difficulty to cope with the new sociocultural environment might have caused the attitudes of separation and withdrawal. Students come from a collectivist society which encourages group memberships. This led students to always feel the need to be among their friends (Algerian group) in order to establish a positive social identity. In line with what the data shows, continuous in-group contact, sharing, and studying

and the lack of intercultural contact, communication, and exchange led students to develop new biases, hostile attitudes, and intercultural misunderstandings. The following negative views were constructed during the initial period of the study abroad experience: the host society is unwelcoming and judgmental (Amira), alcohol is the only way to socialise (Wassim), British are individualistic and introvert (Omar), people are superficial and cold (Farah). Meanwhile, students considered themselves as welcoming, kind, helpful, and aware of what is wrong and what is right. Nonetheless, participants revealed their wish to engage in intercultural exchange and social participation to adjust to and understand diversities.

According to the research findings, students' intercultural contact, willingness to categorise with others, and motivation to learn about diversity differed. Some students, for example Ramzi, Omar, Wassim, Farah, and Sara started to develop new social routines and adaptability strategies such as joining different groups and taking part in different activities with students from different cultural backgrounds. Other students, for example Youcef and Hanan had an introvert character and their intercultural encounters experiences started by attending organized events and gatherings where people from all cultures come together. As for Amira, she opted for social withdrawal and avoidance as she perceived herself as stigmatised and saw host community members as hostile and racist.

One of the main findings of the present research points to the fact that students displayed changes of behaviours and attitudes regarding the host environment and the sociocultural. Interviews and observations taken in the initial period of the programme were different from the ones taken at its end. Students demonstrated open mindedness, tolerance, sensitivity, and awareness towards the end of their sojourning experience. The intercultural transformation of students was a result of continuous experiences of trial to adjust to the new site. Experiences entailed a rich intercultural knowledge construction, intercultural encounters, exchange and communication, and expose. Students could alter their behaviours to

fit, change their perceptions, and move beyond sociocultural stereotypes. As a result, students could categorise with others from various groups based on shared passions, trait of universalism, or even differences.

The above results extend our knowledge of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The findings and the framework converge together to suggest that the way an individual identifies himself and perceives the others will affect his attitudes, behaviours, and ability to adapt. As suggested by the SIT, individuals strive to construct a positive self-image to achieve a positive social identity and assert it through in-group membership. As displayed by the research results, this was not an easy task for participants when confronted with cultural novelties. Students' ability to adapt and identify with others varied according to various factors. The feelings of stress and confusion were inevitable and even worrying. Findings showed that the negative effects could be buffered. Engaging in intercultural communication and exchange and providing students with means to explore their identity and reflect on their experiences can minimise the negative feelings, and eventually help students move beyond group boundaries to develop an intercultural identity.

6.5. Barriers to Intercultural Identity Development

Data exhibited that students faced several sociocultural difficulties during their sojourning experience. These challenges entailed both positive and negative outcomes. While some students could deal with the challenges brought by unfamiliarity, lack of knowledge, and absence of guidance and develop interculturally, others shut down and witnessed an intercultural regression, development of new biases, and inability to adapt (see code 5.5.7, p.217). Data displayed that such challenges were caused by mainly two factors: the study abroad programme structure, and the absence of pre-departure preparedness.

6.5.1. Study Abroad Programme Structure

The present research theories converge to posit that identity is socially constructed through social practices. The research findings align with what the SIT, CTI, TCCA posit as necessary factors for the development of intercultural identity and for intercultural transformation and adaptability: intercultural exposure and communication. Data revealed that students who established rich social routines, engaged in intercultural exchange with others, and constructed a social network that was culturally diverse were more adaptive to changes. They developed an intercultural identity through a process that was faster than students who tried to engage when invited, took part in organised events, and where rarely taking the initiative to start a conversation with member of other cultures (local or other). Data also showed that students who adopted withdrawal and separation in the host environment did not progress interculturally and developed new biases about the host environment and its people.

The complete inability of some students to adapt to the new culture as a result of unguided intercultural exposure and type of the study abroad programme is worrying. Data showed that the structure and the content of the study abroad programme constituted an important part of the failure of some students to adapt and their continuous confusion and fear to engage in discursive practices (see code 5.4.7.1, p.193). Since the beginning of the programme till its completion, students were placed in study groups which were comprised only of their Algerian co-nationals. Classes neither offered cultural knowledge about the host culture, not introduced students to diversity inside the university and outside of it. Data displayed students' disappointment in the absence of class cultural diversity, absence of cultural content and guidance.

As the programme's main and only objective was restricted to improving students' four skills (needed for their IELTS exam) and guide them through the process of applying to UK universities, intercultural knowledge construction depended solely on students. As data denoted before, some students faced more difficulties than others in interacting and

engaging with others due to their personality, fear of being judged, cultural misunderstandings, and environmental factors (e.g. social mistreatment). Whenever participants faced a situation which entailed irritation, stress, or shock, they had no staff, faculty member, a professional, or any sessions that could help in orienting them during their intercultural experience and provide a space where fears and perceptions could be voiced, and questions asked. Hence, going back to the Algerian group became a response conditioned by cultural misunderstandings and confusion.

Intercultural learning and development was a very challenging process. Residence in the host culture did not automatically produce intercultural identity. Unfortunately, the programme scheme did not take this into account. Administrators and policy makers were mainly preoccupied with increasing the number of exchange students, largely ignoring the barriers that might hinder the intercultural learning process and minimise the positive outcomes of the study abroad experience (e.g. psychological factors, personal predispositions, cultural shock, avoidance, and separation).

6.5.2. Absence of Pre-departure Preparedness

Students' relocation to another sociocultural environment was full of novel experiences, unknown cultural differences, and unforeseen unfamiliarity for which they were not prepared. Their sojourning experience entailed interactions across social, cultural, and geographical boundaries. Students came to the UK with neither prior intercultural knowledge about the host environment and its people, nor a pre-established faculty members-students relation. Even though participants needed an intercultural preparedness before coming to the UK to effectively function in the host cultural environment, none was granted to them. Hence, the absence of pre-departure orientation and intercultural training minimised from the positive outcome of the cultural experience for some students, and led to unpredictable cultural misunderstandings, and difficulties to accommodate to the host environment.

As students never travelled before outside their country of origin, they did not have an appropriate cultural knowledge about the target culture and no previous experiences of deep and meaningful intercultural communication experiences. Consequently, students could not enhance their cultural efficiency prior to their exposure and went through a process of adaptability full of stress, confusion, and sometimes withdrawal. These results align with the claim of Brinkmann & Weerdenburg (2003) who assert that intercultural knowledge about the host environment and the ability to communicate effectively are very important prerequisites for enhancing the participant's self-efficacy prior the exposure experience. Data taken from the students' interviews denoted clearly their lack of preparation and how it influenced their perceptions and experience during their time in the UK. Students endured cultural misunderstandings, stress, confusion, and even inability to adapt to the new environment (case of Amira) due to their unpreparedness and the absence of any source of professional, personal, and academic support.

It seems that the study scheme designers focused solely on the academic goal of training students for the IETLS exam and ignored the needs of participants for intercultural training to ensure an effective and successful exposure experience. The uncertainty and confusions caused by unpredictable factors that accompanied the participants' immersion in the UK could have been reduced through helping students create realistic expectations and improve their understanding about the host culture. Data showed that participants' stereotypes, unrealistic expectations, and superficial cultural knowledge influenced their immersion experience and their cultural development. Students expressed their wish to be guided prior and during the experience.

Students faced a lot of challenges due to the absence of intercultural resourcefulness. Intercultural exposure and learning was a challenging process that needed to be worked on before and during the experience abroad. The intercultural experience enabled students to acquire knowledge and understanding about the British and Western societies in

general. However, if accompanied with pre-departure preparedness and guidance, the experience could be more effective and helpful for the development of intercultural identity. Mainly, students who were shy, introvert, and who had difficulties in accommodating to the new environment could have benefited from the intercultural preparedness and guidance to a great extent.

6.6. Answering the Research Questions

The previous section discussed the milestones of the research findings and compared them to the previous literature. The following section goes to explicitly and directly answer the questions from which this study departed. This study aims to tackle the development of intercultural identity during study abroad programmes and had three conceptual questions. The findings are expected to address and sufficiently answer these questions.

RQ1. What are the key factors influencing the intercultural identity development of students during the study abroad programmes?

Data in chapter 5 suggest that students' identity was influenced by a number of factors during their immersion experience in the UK. Intercultural exposure was the key influencing element of students' intercultural transformation. Exposure helped students develop an intercultural knowledge through hands on experience learning which eventually led them to change their perceptions of self and others. Intercultural exchange and contact had a pivotal role in enabling a better understanding of cultural differences and views. It helped students to be more socially engaging and active. As a result, students could establish social routines, knit a social network, and build a sense of community with members from diverse cultural backgrounds. This entailed the development of a flexible, open, culturally sensitive identity that enabled participants move beyond the confines of their original identity and group favouritism and categorization.

However, data also suggested that intercultural identity can also go through a process of regression rather than development through the study abroad programme. This was highlighted in the responses of a participant who did not reach adaptability and felt homesick until the last day of the experience. During the collection of the data, other students who were not part of the case study reported similar emotions and experiences. My participant inability to develop interculturally was due to experiences of ill social treatment, personal predisposition, absence of cultural resourcefulness and guidance, absence of intercultural contact and social engagement, and opting for the withdrawal and separation as a coping strategy (Berry, 2001). The participant was constantly trying to assert her identity and establish a positive social identity through seeking comfort with her group of co-nationals. This social withdrawal led to the development of new biases, negative change of perceptions, and eventually maladaptation.

RQ2: what behaviours and perceptions are associated with the development of intercultural identity during the study abroad programme?

Adjustment to a new cultural environment was an intercultural learning process through exposure, engagement, and continuous reflection of self and other. Data displayed that intercultural exposure was a ground of learning about diversities and understanding others' behaviours and perceptions. This granted students the needed intercultural awareness to correct their previous misconceptions and develop more than one frame of cultural interpretation. Also, students shifted from being intimidated by unfamiliarity and afraid to lose their identity, to accepting differences, developing an intercultural curiosity and willingness to learn, and introduce others to their culture and way of life. Students could integrate and gradually accommodate to changes around them. Participants displayed a broader world-view, openness, tolerance, and respect of diversities. Moreover, the findings pointed to the impulsive reactions and judgmental stances students took when faced with intercultural misunderstandings at the beginning of the experience, and how exposure

and contact helped them to alter their behaviours and to be intercultural sensitive later on.

Intercultural contact and exchange with other helped students develop their interactional skills and confidence. Many students reported that despite their fluency in English, they remained afraid of being linguistically judged. They also reported their continuous hesitation to approach others. Throughout their experience, students could be part of various intercultural contact experiences. This helped them to form new connections and culturally diversify their social network. Students reported that they were part of various groups (other than the Algerian one) with which they developed a sense of belonging which was very important to their adaptation.

Hence, in this research, intercultural identity development was marked by students' intercultural awareness, open mindedness, intercultural sensitivity, and the ability to categorise with more than one cultural group. Aligning with Kim's (2001) definition, students' intercultural identity was an extension of their original cultural identity where new systems and frames were explored. Their intercultural identity helped them categorise with more than one cultural group through experiences of exchange and interactions.

RQ3: How can we facilitate students' development of intercultural identity through study abroad programmes in the future?

The understanding of the culturally different other is not passively acquired through reading and studying only, but also developed through exposure to different values and worldviews. It was through exposure that the Algerian ways of thinking were questioned and contrasted with the alternatives presented to them. These contrasts gave rise to multiple cultural misunderstandings fuelled by students' unpreparedness and feeling of loss within the diversity of the host cultural milieu.

Intercultural learning and development is a complex process that students who are to be relocated need to work on before and during their immersion experience. Data implied that intercultural preparedness prior coming to the UK could help students familiarize with the host environment through providing practical information and advice about it. Intercultural preparedness could maximize the positive outcomes of the study abroad programme experience through informing students of different cultural values, and social demands of the host culture so that they replace their stereotypical image of the host environment with an accurate realistic image.

Data revealed that knowledge alone is not sufficient to develop interculturally and adapt to the host environment and students faced a lot of situations that contradicted their expectations. Hence, in order to help students to familiarise with the host environment and guide them throughout their experience, intercultural preparedness could also entail putting students in contact with some faculty members, tutors, and programme administrators who can orient them prior and during their experience in the UK. Data showed that students needed some support to get over some of the intercultural difficulties and misunderstandings. Students had a lot of questions which remained unanswered. Moreover, the findings reflected that students were very likely to go to events that were organized and start their socialization from there, implying that participants wanted to adapt, engage, and socialize but did not know how. Hence, programme designers and administrators could include cultural and social events as a way to provide a frame for students to engage and socialize with others from different cultural background. Furthermore, the classroom setting is considered as the first place of interaction and network building for students. Data clearly indicated that putting students in in-groups of Algerians with a total absence of group cultural diversity represented a barrier towards intercultural learning and engagement. That is to say that diversity within the classroom setting is important for intercultural development and learning which can facilitate the intercultural identity development for students and maximize the positive outcomes of their sojourning experience.

6.7. Overview of the Findings Guided by the Theoretical Framework

To draw reflections and elements together, the study suggested that Algerian students who sojourned in the UK witnessed and experienced a wide range of cultural diversity. As discussed, students came from a monocultural country and were exposed to the same culture since birth. Students that I have interviewed came culturally unprepared and had no intercultural resourcefulness or guidance during their experience abroad. This led students to face a lot of intercultural challenges that stem from facing conflicting values in the host environment, and inability to understand diversity due to the absence of intercultural training and guidance as well as personal and environmental factors. Participants were confronted with a different sociocultural value system and differences which were sometimes difficult to recognise and reconcile.

In many respects, students' initial struggle to adjust shows the power of intercultural immersion on identity and the extent to which exposure and exchange can transform behaviours, perceptions, and feelings. Besides the absence of intercultural pre-departure preparedness and in-programme guidance, the thematic analysis found an effect of personal predispositions and environmental factors on intercultural identity development.

Findings imply that students faced the acculturative stress related to relocation (Berry, 2001) and developed different coping strategies. Generally, all students experienced great difficulty in adhering to their cultural values when surrounded by a society so different from their own. However, their coping strategies differed. Students who were initiating contact and exchange with others showed better adaptation and displayed an intercultural identity development that helped them to integrate into the new sociocultural environment. Nonetheless, others opted for separation as they emphasised only their original culture and displayed no interest in learning about the new environment. In this case, data indicated that the home network was a source of emotional and moral support, understanding and reassurance.

The research shows the complicated and dynamic process of trial and error throughout which sojourners tried to learn new cultural norms and values and accommodate their behaviours and routines in accordance to the new sociocultural demands. In doing so, students could change their behaviours and perceptions and establish different social routines which helped them to socialise with others and identify with more than one group. Students could then socially fit within the host sociocultural environment. This aligns with the communicative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001) which accounts for the process by which students establish a functional relationship with the new sociocultural milieu. The research confirms that, as the theory posits, personal communication, environmental factors, social communication, and individual predispositions are influential factors in intercultural identity development. However, the findings illustrate that unlike what the theory posits, stress and anxiety engendered by the relocation does not trigger the adaptation process leading to psychological growth only. The feeling of discomfort, stress, and uncertainty can lead sojourners to experience an adaptation and transformation process that is regressive rather than progressive. This backward movement in the intercultural transformation and adjustment cycle reflects that students can be maladaptive, and that change can entail stronger attachment to the original cultural identity, refusal to adhere to new cultural values, and rejection of diversity.

Crossing geographical borders from Algeria to the UK entailed the need to reduce from uncertainty through building a social network and establishing the feeling of belonging to it. The process of social identification (placing oneself in a larger categorisation system; Tajfel, 1982) is extremely important in shaping people's attitudes which may, in turn, determine the psychological outcome. The feeling of belonging to a larger group promotes self-esteem and affects the behaviours (Ellemers et al., 2002). This was demonstrated by the data in displaying students' behaviours across group boundaries when they were faced with uncertainty and differences. During the initial period of the study abroad, students displayed the constant need to go back to their in-group to establish the feeling of belonging to a social network. This feeling helped

them build their positive social identity. Students exhibited hostile behaviours and negative judgments towards out-groups. It was until they started socializing, developing interculturally, and engaging with others that they developed an intercultural identity that helped them move beyond group favouritism and us/them categorization. Hence, as the SIT posits, establishing a positive social identity is indeed essential when coping with challenges of living in another country.

This research additionally denotes that intercultural encounter experiences had a deep impact on the development of participants' intercultural identity. Intercultural knowledge construction through interaction with others made a contribution to the change in students' behaviours and perceptions and helped them to eventually construct an intercultural identity. Crossing borders and studying and living in a socioculturally different environment placed the concepts of self and other at the heart of the participants' intercultural experiences. Within this intersubjective space, participants took part in culturally enriching experiences which allowed the re-construction of some self and other perceptions. Becoming a confident and independent social learner and communicator, being exposed to differences, engaging in contact and exchange experiences are factors that enabled participants to make meaning, re-evaluate their sense of self and perceptions of other. By doing so, students displayed friendliness, sensitivity, and acceptance of diversity which are all part of the intercultural identity. Hence, aligning with the communicative theory of identity, the research implies that intercultural identity development was a process of self and other communication. This claim is further reinforced through the data that established that students who opted for social withdrawal and did not engage in intercultural communication witnessed a regression in intercultural maturity, development of new biases, and reinforcement of the original cultural identity.

To sum up, we can say that the intercultural learning through study abroad programmes entailed a profound personal change and perspective transformation. The development of intercultural identity during the participants' intercultural experience enabled them to adapt to the setting and move beyond group boundaries. Based on the discussion of the results in this chapter, study abroad programmes can be readily viewed as having the potential to shape the individual's experience within the cultural space. In this way, intercultural development through exposure is a transformational experience that goes in two directions: the enhancement of the cultural capacities and development of intercultural identity, or the hindering of intercultural and personal growth. The chapter will further go to provide some suggestions that may minimise the negative outcomes of the study abroad experience for students and help them develop their intercultural identity.

6.8. Contributions to the Field of Knowledge

This study is mainly located in the literature of education, intercultural studies, intercultural adjustment theories, and study abroad programmes' outcomes as reviewed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. In this section, in view of the findings of this study, I will discuss to what extent this study could contribute to the existing literature and policy.

6.8.1. Theoretical Contributions to the Existing Literature

The theoretical implications of this study are significant. Previous scholars have stated that moving to a new place can lead to significant changes for individuals (Kauffman, 2012; Taylor, 1994). The results of this study echo what was described by Kim (2001) as an intercultural identity, where a cultural transformation could happen leading the individual to encompass group boundaries and bond with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and thus establish a positive social identity where the us/them boundaries are blurred (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, this study further developed the model of stress-adaptation growth based on Kim's original theory of cross-cultural adaptation (2001).

Intercultural exposure can entail both progress and regress. Many components are influential in the process of intercultural adaptability, and transformation is influenced by a number of factors including individual experience, self and other perceptions, intercultural contact and communication, intercultural awareness, individual psychological predispositions and environmental factors. Hence, the stress adaptation growth model proposed by Kim (2008) can be adjusted by adding that the growth that sojourners go through after repeated experiences of trial and error is not a certain outcome. Experiences of stress and confusion as a result of intercultural exposure can elicit degradation in the willingness to learn and develop intercultural. The study shows that students who were maladaptive and lacking sources of intercultural information faced intercultural retrogression rather than growth and opted for complete social separation and in-group favouritism as adaptability strategies. Figure 15 bellow illustrates the adjustment to Kim's model.

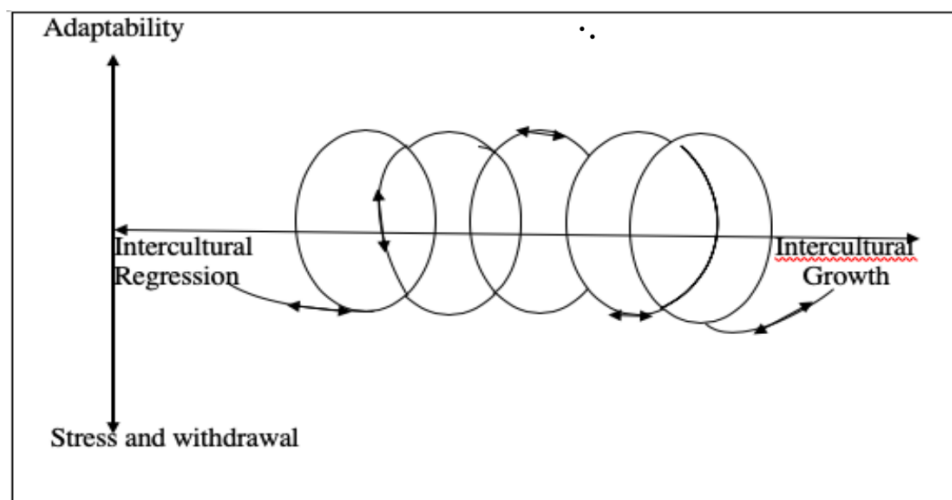


Figure 15. Revised model of the Stress-adaptation Growth Cycle (Kim, 2001)

This study's theoretical framework converged together three theories to accurately examine the process of intercultural identity development and the factors influencing it. The theories account for the role of communication in identity development, the influence of self and other perceptions and social identification of group categorization, and the psychological growth of student during immersion experiences. This is the

first study gathering these theories to establish a clear understanding of how sojourners make sense of their experiences, explain their behaviours across group boundaries, and clarify the influential factors which contribute to the development or hindering of intercultural identity. The framework provided a ground of solid understanding of the intercultural learning experiences through study abroad programmes to help designing programmes that align with the students' needs and help them maximise the positivity of their intercultural experiences.

Considering the academic interests and intellectual background, the existing literature on study abroad programmes is, to a certain extent, based on case studies of participants from western countries (mainly North America, Britain, Australia, Europe) or Eastern ones (Mainly China) which differ socioculturally from the case study this research investigated. This study shed the light on a case that have not been investigated when it comes to adaptability and intercultural transformation of students during relocation experiences. The findings suggest that intercultural identity development entails a shift in beliefs and value system, and behavioural, emotional, and cognitive development or deterioration. The study supports the constructionists' view that identity is flexible and changing and developed within the social realm through interaction and engagement. Additionally, results display that the sojourner who adapts to the cultural milieu can fully adjust to the setting without relinquishing her/her original cultural identity. The present study highlights that intercultural identity development is not a spontaneous transformation, but a learning process, and lends support to Hecht's (2003) claim that identity is constructed through self and other communication, and to Kim's (2001) and Patton's (2007) assertion that identity development is a dynamic learning process through intercultural exposure resulting in qualitative transformation. Investigating a different sociocultural group resulted in findings that both align and contradict other research.

6.8.2. Policy Implications: Pre-departure Preparedness and In-programme Guidance

This study adds empirical evidence to statements positing that crossing geographical boundaries during the study abroad experience is initially painful and evoking a great amount of stress (Martin & Harell, 1996; Kim, 2001). However, the outcome can be positive (Brown & Holloway, 2008) or, as this study findings showed, negative. Emotional and psychological discomfort were greatest during the initial period abroad and fluctuating for some students and decreasing for others through the sojourn. Hence, psychological and cultural preparedness are important adjusting resources in the struggle between the original identity and the new values and in the ability to overcome sociocultural obstacles through developing an intercultural identity.

Intercultural adaptability to a western culture is a learning process at first. Creating a national pre-departure programme for students who are to be relocated to another cultural environment is an important cultural resource to maintain a sound psychological and emotional state. Algerian sojourning students should be open to differences, accepting, and sensitive enough to the new cultural diversity they are confronted with while actively constructing an intercultural knowledge about the society and its norms and demands. Hence, intercultural preparedness is the first step towards developing an intercultural identity that will be the engine of the students' effective functioning and positive immersion experience.

This research suggest that it is extremely important for the governments and institutions to develop new initiatives within the education sector to help students to have a successful intercultural experience. These initiatives should include discussion of cognitive, affective, and emotional strategies which can help students adapt and develop interculturally. The study showed that living within unfamiliar sociocultural realities and trials to adapt to contexts of relative disempowerment entails a psychological struggle. These struggles and difficulties need to be considered in developing the preparation programme scheme for the study abroad.

Intercultural preparedness pre-departure programme should align with the students' needs for a successful sojourning experience. The ministry of higher education, being the initiator of the scholarship scheme and thus the supervising body, should be tasked with designing a programme which aims at raising students' awareness of the host cultural environment and the differences between the host and original cultures. The programme should introduce students to the new cultural environment through putting interculturally trained people (Algerians and internationals) at the centre of the courses and workshops that are not only academically oriented but also culturally focused. Students need to be introduced to different aspects of the sociocultural life and prepared to face difficulties that may rise during times of probable misunderstandings. Students need to be made aware that interpretations may differ, and they should be guided through coping strategies that would help them adapt and develop interculturally.

Developing coping strategies can stem from introducing students to 'vignettes' of different intercultural failure and success experiences and provide a space for discussions, meaning making and reflections. Another important factor of successful intercultural transition is introducing students to the host university staff members in order to provide an academic element of familiarity within the host environment. Since the ministry signed the pre-sessional course contract with only one university in the OUK, conducting videoconferencing sessions where students are introduced to the academic environment and campus life would be very feasible and beneficial for students.

It is worth noting that the ways in which participants dealt with their daily struggles, and the ways in which they managed to overcome their emotional and psychological discomfort are attributed to their personal choices, capabilities, and skills. It is clear from this study that a great deal of learning or/and development of different views and beliefs took place outside the parameters of the academic realm of the structured elements of the study abroad programme. Hence, there is a need to pay attention to the students' struggles outside academia and put in place a support system where they can find cultural guidance and orientation when needed.

Even though students' intercultural experiences influence their intercultural learning and development, the structure of the study abroad programme and the academic support play a prominent role in the adaptability and intercultural learning during the study abroad. Hence, the programme designers should work on helping all students during their process of adaptability and intercultural transformation. To start with, students' study groups should be diversified including students from different cultural backgrounds rather than Algerians only. This study indicated that engaging in interaction and exchange with others built a bridge to otherness and provided opportunities for developing interactional skills and intercultural knowledge. Hence, putting students in in-groups hinders their intercultural development as it does not grant them the opportunity to form network relationships that have the potential to facilitate their adaptation through interaction, friendships, and intercultural modelling and dialogue.

Students reported significant struggles during their experience abroad. This study can advocate the establishment of a supportive environment to encourage the fostering of students' intercultural transformational experience. In-programme counselling sessions can be suggested to help students during their relocation experience. Trained academics and staff members can help students suffering from stress and psychological discomfort caused by sociocultural differences. Moreover, in lieu of demonstrating understanding and feeding students linguistically and academically, programme designers should have practical roles in putting in place appropriate sociocultural activities that encourages intercultural engagement to facilitate Algerian students' adjustment and intercultural identity development.

6.8.3. Implications for Pedagogy

University teaching and support staff of the host universities should put in place a scheme to encourage students who take part in a study abroad programme develop an intercultural knowledge through helping them build an international network. This recommendation stem from the findings related to the role of intercultural encounters in intercultural identity development. Universities should orient students towards ways in which they can build relations with others by giving them insights about the different social activities and cultural events organised by the university. This can be done, for example, through emails and orientation events. Furthermore, educators can assist students engage in intercultural communicative exchanges through including diverse intercultural elements in the classroom context. For example, study groups should include students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, and teachings about the host society cultural norms and values should be included.

As for the Algerian educational system, since intercultural exposure in Algeria is limited for students, classroom teaching should include authentic material which includes international cultures in a way that helps students reflect on their own culture in relation to other and helping them construct a sphere of interculturality. This can be done through developing collaborations with different universities across the world and building an intercultural online platform dedicated for intercultural learning. This will help students create an international network and learn about different cultural through interlocutions with students from diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, Algerian educators need to explore ways to internationalise the curriculum and its activities. Participants (and all Algerian students doing an English language degree) studied two English specialities; either English linguistic sciences, or literature and civilization. The Algerian university should revise the curriculum design of both subjects and

develop new ideas and innovative collaborations to internationalize the curriculum.

The research findings illustrated that students could not manage their intercultural expectations as they had an image of the host culture (taught in classes) that was different from what they encountered in the British environment. Hence, classes should go beyond teaching students about the different eras and stream of thoughts of the British literature, or the different stereotypes the world has about native speakers (Americans and British). To date, our curriculum largely does not integrate the important dimension of interculturality in any way. This is the sort of interculturalism that should be incorporated in language classrooms.

6.9. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Through sampling the Algerian students studying in the UK, this study has provided valuable evidence with regard to whether or not the Algerian students experienced an intercultural transformation throughout their intercultural immersion experience and what factors contributed to this transformation. The study provides higher education institutions in Algeria with insights into the students' experiences abroad and information to assist in recognizing what aspects of their sociocultural stay caused concern. However, I would like to draw attention to some limitations encountered during the research which need to be considered in future research.

The present study focused on the process of intercultural identity development, and explored students' views, perceptions, and meaning making of their experiences of difference and process of adaptability. All the issues and reflections related to this study were taken from the sojourners' perspective. Hence, it is advised that more research address perspectives and reflections of the academics and staff on the students' intercultural development or/and struggles to adapt.

It is worth mentioning that I regret not interviewing stakeholders, academics, and programme designers on some of the issues that were not anticipated by this research such as: the logic behind placing students in in-group study groups, the criteria behind the choice of university, and the developmental goals of the governmental funding body and the host university. Therefore, if further research tackles all these points from all the perspectives, it would provide an increased awareness for students, policy makers, programme supervisors, and academic staff to promote a better intercultural experience.

Another question that further research can answer is whether the students' intercultural identity and changes of development of their value system and beliefs about interculturality and diversity are irreversible. Hence, follow up studies in their following academic years in the UK or/and when they return home can provide empirical evidence for the interculturally transformative nature of the study abroad programme.

The present study contributes in expanding the understanding of the process of adaptability and intercultural identity development. Drawing on a multi-methods data collection approach, the findings can be combined providing an in-depth, comprehensive account of the difficulties that Algerian students encountered when exposed to a novel cultural environment and the and the outcomes of their experience of their intercultural identity. This study can lay down the possibility of expansion to compare the experience of Algerian students throughout other countries and cultures. In doing so, several researchers can be involved in a similar study and contribute in increasing the number of participants in order to ensure a statistical representation of the studied phenomena (development of Algerian students intercultural identity abroad). This can allow assessing the inter-rater reliability in qualitative research.

Another potential limitation which may also be seen as a considerable strength of this study is the student-researcher close relation as I was a participant observer during the data collection. This is referred to as 'reflexivity' which has already been tackled in Chapter 3. Notwithstanding

the fact that most common approaches to social sciences research emphasise neutral, impersonal and objective role of the researcher, the researcher-students relation and shared similarities allowed for an in-depth analysis of the topic from a culturally sensitive point of view. The data analysis and interpretation were enriched by the fact that it was anchored in a deep understanding of the cultural values and social norms of Algeria by the researcher.

6.10. Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the research literature by adding more data and knowledge regarding the development of intercultural identity during study abroad programmes, and the major factors which play a role in either the development or the regress of intercultural identity. This study approaches Algerian students' intercultural identity transformation in interculturally diverse environments more as a gradual process consisting of different life experiences that accumulatively influence the individual's intercultural identity rather than an outcome triggered by a major transition or change (though I account for various changes and transitions during this transformative process). The results obtained from this study have looked at the process of intercultural transformation and identity change throughout the sojourning experience of Algerian students in the UK through an ethnographic research strategy. This study provides ample evidence to suggest that throughout their study abroad experience, students undergo a transformation in their intercultural identity that can be developmental resulting in nurturing intercultural personhood, or regressive resulting in separation, withdrawal, and degradation in the willingness to learn about diversity or accept it. Implications of my findings can be considered in the fields of intercultural training (pre-departure preparedness), programme design, curriculum design, pre-sessional programme course content, and cultural exchanges.

As discussed in chapter 2, the number of students doing a study abroad programme is rapidly growing. Hence, with the increasing number of students who study in the UK and other locations, it is important to provide

appropriate support for assisting students in their adaptability and intercultural development. The present research results can be very helpful for policy makers and programme designers in Algeria as well as in other countries to facilitate and enrich the students' intercultural experiences and minimise the negative outcomes that sojourning abroad entails. The present research helps people and institutions to have a deeper understanding about the influence of exposure on intercultural identity of sojourning students, along with the emotional difficulties and psychological pressure associated with relocation. Lastly, this study does not solely aim at mapping the key factors effecting sojourners' intercultural identity development. The research also suggests the ways in which the study abroad experience can become related to positive personal growth and help in nurturing intercultural identity for establishing a functional relationship with any sociocultural diverse host environment. Additionally, the present thesis provides suggestions about adding an intercultural element to Algerian foreign language classes.

I would like to conclude with some personal reflections about some of the major things that the process of pursuing this research degree has taught me. Doing my research as an insider, -member of the 'in-group' of Algerian students taking part of my research-, meant that I had access to identity traits, cultural characteristics, country's history, and Algerian society's norms and values. Being an insider and sharing the same experiences with students engendered a sense of sameness (Jenkins, 2000). In addition to that, I took part in a study abroad programme back in 2013 and it was that experience of interculturality that changed the way I interpret cultural diversity, and pushed me to be open, tolerant, and curious to learn more. My whole research interest in accounting for the process of intercultural transformation stems from that first experience of intercultural immersion. Hence, my understanding of the process students went through and my awareness of their collective identity required heightened sensitivity to students' routines and mechanisms. A reflexive journal was used to note down my thoughts and possible subjectivities and my frames of interpretation. Doing a PhD helped me monitor my stances and reflect upon my interpretations constantly

During the process of my PhD, I developed a richer cultural understanding about my research group, the programme design, the type of government-students contract, and statistics that were and are not put on any public record, often for reasons that are unknown. I benefited from not only the advantages of being attuned to the nuances of a shared identity, experience, and language, but also to having access to all the information needed for my research through personal contact with professionals at the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. During the process of crafting this thesis, I considered my position as a researcher legitimated through my own experience as a student abroad and my understanding of the host culture.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Semi Structured Interviews

Interview Schedule 1

I. Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) [shake hands] My name is Amina, I am a research student at Bath University, an Algerian laureate as you, and very interested in exploring your study abroad experience here and how it can impact your intercultural identity.

B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your past cultural exposure experiences if there are any, and your experience as an Algerian student in the UK. I also want to clarify that you can speak in either Arabic, French, Or English.

C. (Motivation) With your permission, I hope to use your input for my research and PhD dissertation. I also want to bring to your knowledge that I will be recording this interview.

D. (Time Line) The interview should take about 40 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions for this time period?

II Body

1. Why have you opted for this pre-sessional programme in the UK?
2. Does this experience represent your first time abroad and first physical intercultural exposure outside Algeria?
3. Since you came to the UK, could you notice cultural differences between here and Algeria?
 - a. If yes, can you give me some examples?
4. What do you know about the host culture? How did you know about it?
5. Did you have any preconceived idea about the British culture and people?
 - a. Did that change?

6. How would describe your daily living and interactions with others from diverse cultural backgrounds?
7. Are you trying or intending to engage in intercultural communication with others from different cultural backgrounds?
 - a. If yes with whom? And what do you expect to gain from it?
8. Did you take part of social activities?
 - a. Did you go alone?
 - b. Was the event with people from you won country or with other from different cultural backgrounds?
8. Have you experienced any feeling or social rejection based on background or sociocultural affiliations?
9. Can you provide an example of a culturally challenging situation and how did you react to it?
 - a. Are there any other experiences that you would like to describe?
10. What do you expect from this experience?

III. Closing

- E. I should have all the information I need, and our interview came to its end. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?
- F. Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on with regard to your experience so far?
- G. Thanks again. Is it okay to contact you via email or phone to schedule our next interview?

Interview Schedule 2

I. Opening

A. (establishing Rapport) Hi. Thank you for meeting me today for our second interview. As you might know, I am interested in exploring your study abroad experience here in the UK and how it can affect your intercultural development.

B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions regarding your experience and your perceptions and views as an Algerian immersed for the first time in this cultural environment.

c. (Motivation) With your permission, I aim to use the input you provide for my research and PhD dissertation. Also, I want to remind that this interview is going to be recorded.

D. (Timeline) As previously established on the call/email/text, the interview should take about 40 minutes.

II. Body

1. What do you think about the host sociocultural environment so far?
2. Did your ideas about the people here and their culture change?
 - a. If so, in what way?
3. Is this experience helping you learn about cultural diversity?
 - a. If so, in what way?
4. Are you trying to adapt to the host cultural environment?
 - a. Is it challenging for you?
5. Do you feel that it is necessary for you to feel like a member of the host culture?
6. Are you doing any activities with people other than your fellow Algerians?
 - a. If so, what type of activities?
 - b. What do you aim to gain from it?
7. Have you taken part in interactional experiences with others?
 - a. Was it easy for you to approach others?
8. Are you doing any activities with people other than your fellow Algerians ?

a. What type of activities have you done and what do you aim to gain from them?

9. Can you tell me about an experience/anecdote that you felt was culturally informative/enriching or challenging?

a. How did you react to it/feel about it?

10. Is this experience meeting your expectations?

a. Can you tell me why/how?

III. Closing

E. I should have all the information I need by now. Our interview has come to an end. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

F. Is there any further experience, feeling, or other thing that you would like to share regarding your experience so far?

G. Thank you very much for your time. What will be the best way to contact you for our next interview?

Interview Schedule 3

I. Opening

A. Hello (greeting the student by his/her name). Thank you for making the time for our third interview today. This is the interview before the last. I have been conducting interviews along the time of your study abroad programme to gather insights upon your intercultural experience of and the impact it is having on your intercultural transformation.

B. As I every interview, I will be asking you some questions regarding your experience and your perceptions and views as an Algerian immersed for the first time in this cultural environment.

C. Data collected will be used in future research and my PhD dissertation. Also, I want to remind that this interview will take approximatively 40 minutes and is going to be recorded. I also want to remind you that you can choose the language you are the most comfortable with.

II. Body

1. What do you think about the host sociocultural environment and its people?
2. Did this experience help you learn about cultural differences?
 - a. If it did, how? If it did not, why do you think is that?
3. Have you taken part in any sociocultural activities?
 - a. If yes, what are they and what have learned from those activities?
 - b. if no, why?
4. Do you feel as a member of the host sociocultural environment?
5. Do you see yourself as part of a different social group other than your group of Algerian friends?
 - a. Is your socializing (social activities) only with Algerians or does it extend to others from diverse cultural backgrounds?
6. Have you engaged in contact with people from other cultural backgrounds than yours?
 - a. How do you feel about your intercultural interactional experiences?

7. What are the contexts of intercultural interaction that you think are more informative and culturally enriching? (if asked for elaboration: inside academic institutions/Outside academic institutions).
8. Do you feel that you have adapted to the host environment?
 - a. If yes, what strategies do you think are helping you to adapt to the host environment?
 - b. If no, what factors are hindering your adaptability?
9. What was/is the best source of intercultural learning for you. Be it here or back in Algeria?
10. Can you tell me about a challenging experience you have faced?
 - a. How did you react to it?
11. Can you tell me about an experience that you think was culturally enriching?

III. Closing

- D. Well, I have asked all the questions and our interview has come-to an end. Is there anything you would like to ask me?
- E. Is there any further experience, feeling, or other thing that you would like to share regarding your experience so far?
- F. Thank you very much for your time. I will be contacting you in 5/6 weeks for our last interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Interview Schedule 4

I. Opening

A. Hi again. You must now have become very familiar with my study and the interviewing process. This is our last semi structured interview. It should last around 40 minutes.

B. I have been now collecting data for 6 months. I want to gather some information about you, your experience, your perceptions, and whether this intercultural study abroad programme had an impact on your intercultural learning and development.

C. I also want to remind you that you can talk in the language you feel the most comfortable with; either Arabic, French, or English. With your permission, I will be recording this interview for research purposes.

II Body

1. What are the most important things about culture that this exposure experience taught you?

2. Do you see cultural differences the same way you used to?

Do you have a culturally diverse social network now?

3. How would you describe your daily living and interactions with others now?

4. What was/were the main source(s) of your intercultural learning during this study abroad experience?

5. Did the academic context and lectures provide you with cultural insights which helped you understand the culture better?

a. If so, in what way? If not, why?

6. Do you think you were prepared for the sociocultural challenges you have encountered?

7. Do you think you could have been prepared better for this study abroad experience?

a. If yes, how?

8. Do you feel you have adapted well to the host sociocultural environment?
9. Describe how you feel that you have changed, since beginning this course, in your sensitivity to those of other cultures, confidence, openness, and cultural awareness. If possible, give specific examples of any change in your behaviour or relationships with those of cultures that are different than your own.
10. How would you evaluate your experience?
11. How do you feel about crossing geographical boundaries now?
12. If you are to rewind this experience, would you change anything? a. If so, why?
13. Since the beginning of our interviewing process, you have been given the choice to choose between Arabic, French, or English. Can you please tell me why have you opted for X language?

III Closing

- C. Our interview ends here. I have the information I need now. Do you have any questions for me or anything you want to add?
- D. Is it okay to keep your contact details in order to send you the transcripts of the interviews we conducted to read and validate their accuracy and correctness?
- E. Thank you for your insightful input. Please let me know if you would be interested in receiving a short summary of what my research has shown when I have completed it.

Appendix 2

Research Observations

November 4th, 2016

- At 4pm, students went to the student union of the university where different societies were advertising for their clubs and activities and urging students to join. Some of the students were in groups just where Algerians were and not mingling with others. This event represented the first one where they are in a context of unfamiliarity (students from diverse cultural backgrounds and an event which their original universities in Algeria never organized).

- Youcef is already trying to make some contact and join the choir society. The student went to the club promoting for it, took a leaflet and asked what is offered. The student started to tell him about it and Youcef kept on looking and sometimes expressing admiration. Youcef is a good guitar player and played this card to display knowledge about music and also try to create a common ground with his interlocutor. Youcef was not alone when he approached the Choir society students, he was accompanied with another Algerian friend. This reflects that the student wants to initiate an intercultural contact but being with someone he knows and is familiar with helped him be more confident. After subscribing with the society, he went back to his Algerian friends to announce this to them.

- Meanwhile, Sara, Farah, and 3 other Algerian students were talking to 3 other international students. It was rather the international students who initiated the discussions through presenting themselves, countries, and university subjects. Sara and Farah responded by the same sequence of information: names, country, and what they are studying. The interaction was friendly but rather short as other students were trying to get to know other people. The discussion was mainly about studies. Fara and Sara felt nice about it. They smiled and pointed to the fact that international students are nicer and friendlier than natives. This probably stems from the fact that international students were the ones initiating the contact, smiling, and showing interest in interacting with Algerians. Sara and Farah did not initiate any intercultural contact and seemed like they were waiting for others to come to them and start talking.

- Omar stayed with his Algerian group of friends. He then was encouraged by the presence of Yacine who encouraged him to go together and join some societies. Yacine mentioned that it could be fun and there is nothing to lose, if they don't feel like it, they can drop at any point.

- 12am: This is the third and the last month where I am attending classes with students. There is no cultural input whatsoever in the academic context and classes students are enrolled in. They have one class per week with Professor X that tackles interculturality.
- The class started with the professor playing an Algerian Rai song of Cheb Khaled to students. Students did not expect that and were not sure of how to react to it. Some smiled; others were looking in confusion to one another, and others laughed at it. This was probably a way of the professor to demonstrate his knowledge about some cultural aspects of the Algerian culture. After this short introduction, the professor starts lecturing students about intercultural adaptation theories and counter theories. He then gave students examples (from the academic papers) and opened the floor for debate. There was very little engagement and mostly students stayed silent.
- After the class, students (sample) reported that his class was not only boring and not of interest to them, but that he looked down to them and intimidated them. I asked for the reasons behind their feelings and they all reported the same thing: 'the professor does not encourage them, keep repeating that they have a bad level of English, and very lucky few will pass their IELTS exam and get offers from universities'. Maybe this was the way the professor used to encourage them to work harder and develop their skills. However, students took it very badly and it influenced their self-confidence and installed a fear of not doing good enough.
- Amira also mentioned that their professors are using students as a sample for one of their research and that they are the one benefiting from students rather than the opposite. She looked at her other classmates who confirmed that and joined Amira in her feeling of being used and not getting enough guidance and cultural insights that could help them cope with the new sociocultural environment from their professors.
- Algerian students are divided into 4 different groups. None of the groups has any other international students. This makes the classes mono-cultural. The identity of the teacher is, in this context, purely academic (This is how I and all students perceive it).
- Students felt that the academic context did not provide any cultural insights. They asserted that they want to learn about diverse perspectives and be able to go beyond their group boundaries and categorize themselves with more than one cultural group through this immersion experience, and the academic context (referring to classes that are of Algerians only) did not provide them with any opportunity to interact and get to know others who are culturally different.

-Amira was in the kitchen narrating feeling a little bit down. Her friend was with her and were talking about the context they are living in and their perceptions of the British people.

- Sara and Farah joined and started talking about Amira's incident of ill treatment and how they feel regarding that. Farah reported that they felt that regardless of their resilience and commitment to engage in the society and trials to cope and adjust, their British counterparts were always distant and less likely to socialize and engage with them.

- When asked whether they try to initiate contact with others, Sara stated that even if she does, she would expect some efforts from the other person to maintain the discussions going or even the contact later, but that did not happen.

-Hanan pointed to the fact that this is how British are and that they tend to make friendships at an early age, so now it is internationals like themselves who should get used to it and accept their distant introvert nature as part of who they are.

-In a way to cheer the atmosphere up, Sara gets up and motivates others to start preparing for dinner as they will be having a party and hosting other people.

-Tasks are divided, and each one will be cooking something including myself.

-Students will be inviting a British friend (living in the neighboring accommodation) to have dinner with them. Farah points to the importance of cooking some vegetarian meals as that would suit her dietary preferences. This was very thoughtful and considerate and displays and sensitivity to others' differences.

Appendix 03

Key Colours

Green highlight: key statements and expressions relevant to a code or theme.

Orange highlight: draft codes and themes.

Transcripts of Ethnographic Interview 5 Round 3

Researcher: 'If you refuse to go out or talk to others, how would it help you adjust here'

Amira: (answers with a light corner smile as if she is nervous) *I know adjusting will make me*
enjoy the experience more, but *'allah ghaib'* (meaning there is nothing that can be done)? *the need to adjust*

Student shrugging the shoulders' *Giving up / Resignation*

Researcher: what do you mean?

Amira: (long sigh in a sign of expressing tiredness and sadness) *I don't feel like I will manage*
to accommodate and adjust to this cultural environment. *It is so different from what am used*
to and people are so hard to socialize with. I go out and try to engage and each time it is so
stressful, so I prefer staying with *my Algerian* fellows at least *I feel understood and we share a*
lot of cultural and religious traits student looking at her Algerian friends present smiling (as
a way of seeking approval). *The need to establish a social network*

Researcher: But you will then come back for 4 more years to study here, how are you going to manage?

Amira: (seeming thoughtful takes 5 seconds and replies) well I guess I will try to manage and apply to the same university as my friend Rym and Lydia to be with them all the time. Right girls? (looking at her friend seeking comfort and confirmation) *Refused to adjust*

Leaving the student for 20 minutes, taking couple of notes and coming back to the room where they were sitting.

Students started talking about university applications and cities in the UK.

Researcher: Amira if you like a city and a university better and it does not have any of your friends, what will you do?

Amira: They won't leave me alone (turning to Rym laughing) I will kill you if you do, take me with you (Amira hugging her friend and laughing). *Student is stressed and opted for isolation*

Researcher: I know that you have had bad experiences before, is this why you do not want to be alone?

Amira: You know I was *upset, I cried, I stressed out so much* those days then I just *surrendered*
and I know am always going to be seen as different and will be negatively stereotyped because of this (pointing to all her way of dressing) *Jilbab does not make it easy* So at least If I am to face it again, *I will not be alone* *Hadi hiya machi sahla*, I wish things took different turns. But who knows, *balek rabi ysahali koulech, el hamdouleh kanet kadra tkoun worse*. *It is not easy*
Maybe god will facilitate everything. Thank god, it could have been worse. *physical because as a woman I was put*

Student adapted to the context feeling of being a lone wolf. Carry on the social life and the need to remain in her comfort zone as a group.

Transcripts of Semi-structured Interview 4, Round 4

Transcript of semi structured interview 4, Round 4

Researcher: Hi again Youcef. You must now have become very familiar with my study and the interviewing process. This is our last semi structured interview. It should last around 40 minutes.

Youcef: Of course, it became like a ritual now (laughing) → *displaying comfort and ease*

Researcher: I have now been collecting data for 6 months. I want to gather some information about you, your experience, your perceptions, and whether this intercultural study abroad programme had an impact on your intercultural learning and development.

Youcef: Yes, and I am glad and can help you out with my input, if it is valuable for your study (smiling)

Researcher: Of course, it is. And again, thank you for your commitment and cooperation. I also want to remind you that you can talk in the language you feel the most comfortable with; either Arabic, French, or English. With your permission, I will be recording this interview for research purposes.

Youcef: Sure, go ahead let's talk (student sitting on the couch looking comfortable and at ease)

Researcher: perfect. What are the most important things about culture that this exposure experience taught you?

Youcef: culturally speaking, j'ai rencontré beaucoup de personnes from different places from different backgrounds and *I have learned a lot* through this I have learned comment la personne se voit au sein de la société et comment elle voit les autres qui sont similaires ou différents.

J'ai aussi appris comment réagir quand je suis devant des cultures différentes je pense que j'ai gagné beaucoup de maturité à travers cette expérience. Back home, I had *no cultural exposure* whatsoever, I mean you know there is not much diversity in Algeria. I mean it is a very

culturally rich country, but this richness is about foods, dressing. Mais ici c'est les valeurs, les perspectives, c'est toute une façon de vivre qui est différente. So *I came to understand a lot* things that seemed controversial for me in the past and corrected the image I had about people

here and the way of life here. *It is not about Victorian age and Shakespeare* (laughing for 3 seconds) it's about diversities and respect of others no matter who they are and where they

come from. I learned to see people not in terms of where they come from but just as individuals that I should discover and learn from.

Researcher: Talking about differences, do you see cultural differences the same way you used to?

Intercultural knowledge construction

displaying comfort and ease

no cultural exposure

The type of cultural experience acquired in Algeria

but here it's about values

Intercultural knowledge construction

Youcef: No, it is different now. Avant les différences culturelles m'ont toujours intimidé, il y'a toujours le complexe de toi tu viens du 3ème monde d'un pays sous développé tu te sous-estime par rapport à eux mais après c'est bon. Ils sont pas meilleurs ou plus intelligents mais chacun est différent de sa propre manière. Quand tu vis l'interaction culturelle tu constates que toi et l'autre vous êtes tous des être humains et cela aide à élever l'estime en soit. Now I consider those cultural differences as a window opportunity to learn more about others and different cultures and perceptions and ways of life, and I feel I am enjoying the experience way better than when I first came and felt so confused and lacked confidence because I was not prepared to what I found here. → Illustration of the student's confusion due to the absence of a cultural framework

Researcher: So, now that it is easier for you to understand differences, did you manage to have a diverse social network, other than your Algerian friends?

Youcef: to be honest, I would be the last person to call myself a social, outgoing person. I am also a bit apprehensive to socialize with strangers. But that stopped after I spent some time in the campus dorms. I have met really nice people from UK and abroad and as we shared the house facilities as the kitchen and the living room we started talking and exchanging opinions and even cooking and eating together. I felt we are kind of a family there, we became very close and I have learned a lot about their cultures through them and we do some activities on the weekends together and they introduced me to their friends. It is nice to feel part of different groups.

Researcher: So how you would describe your daily interactions and living with others now?

Youcef: Well au début j'étais retissant pour parler ou partager des trucs avec les autres surtout quand il sagissait de conflit culturel ou conflit politique. La dernière fois j'étais avec des amis français et allemands et il y'avait un débat sur la guerre mondiale et je ne savais pas comment m'exprimer parce-que je ne sais pas quelles sont leurs positions donc je choisisais low level english. Bon j'ai su qu'ils ont dépassé cela est devenu presque ridicule après je me sentais plus à l'aise. Well this is just an example to say that it became easier when I interacted more and got to know how people think and get to see their perspectives and how they see things its easier now for me. I am more understanding and trying to be sensitive and open. That helped me in my daily living with everyone, it is much more enjoyable and it's not boring it is like you learn something new each day.

→ Experiential Learning

An example of an interactive interactional encounter where the student was useful about his perceptions reflecting variability

NB: The interview where the student used French more than any other one.

Working Field Notes

12 Thursday Jeudi الخميس 1436 ربيع الثاني 23

Students (Farah / Sara / Hanan) do display continuous willingness to socialize with others and try to be separated from their huge group of only Algerian students but seem to do little to fulfill this need that they express constantly. Farah suggested joining a music group and gave more suggestions to her friends but it seemed that student didn't have a lot of information regarding how and what and tended to lose motivation due to that knowledge gap & absence of guidance within their university setting.

13 Friday Vendredi الجمعة 1436 ربيع الثاني 24

Students are confused and don't know how to fill the knowledge gap. Student feel the urge to socialize and there is a clear awareness of the need to engage in social practices and discursive practices with other but 'seem confused from where to start'. An in-programme orientation session could help guide students in navigating confusion and intercultural misunderstanding.

14 Saturday Samedi السبت 1436 ربيع الثاني 24

"It is hard to approach others" Farah (12-12-2016)

"I am really keen to engage with others but it just seems hard to start with" within (12-12-2016) social programming

"In Algeria it is so easy to bond with people but not here. Here you don't even know how they socialize" (talking with other Algerian students) (Queser 12-12-2016)

Appendix 4

Consent Form



Participant consent form

Name of the researcher: Guerriche Amina

Title of the research: Intercultural Identity Development through Study Abroad

Programmes: Case Study of Algerian Students in a UK University.

This form is to be signed by the person who has agreed to be interviewed and recorded and fully aware of the researcher's physical presence at different points of time (as a participant observer). Data collection is being done for my PhD degree in the Department of Education, University of Bath.

Research Summary

Much of the literature on study abroad outcomes focus on the linguistic proficiency gains, and / or the development of intercultural communication skills (e.g. Nagy, 2008). A smaller number of studies have looked at the influence of study-abroad programmes on attitude change towards different cultures, and very few on the impact on the students' intercultural identity (Kim, 2001). In these studies, cases of Chinese, American, Australian, and European students were taken. To date, no research has explored the development of Algerian students' intercultural identity during the study abroad experience. Furthermore, previous studies which investigated the intercultural development of Algerians have been conducted in contexts such as France and Germany and tackled virtual learning rather than experiential learning or immigrants' adaptability (Vincent-Jones, 2009; Rocheron, 2005). To date no research has addressed the outcomes of experiential learning by Algerian students in the culturally diverse context of the United Kingdom.

The current study seeks to provide new insights on the possible impact that inter-group relations, social contact, and increased cultural exposure may have on the process of intercultural identity development of Algerian students during their sojourn in the UK. Data will be collected by means of semi structured interviews, ethnographic interviews, and ethnographic observations. Based on the results of the present research, can draw a series of implications for theory, and for educational institutions, government agencies, stakeholders, and policy makers concerned with study abroad programmes and the importance of maximizing of positive outcomes of the study abroad experience.

- After understanding my role towards the research, the aims and content of the research, I herebygive my consent to Guerriche Amina to interview me and record the interviews as part of data collection for her conducted research.
- I am fully aware that the researcher is using participant observation as a data collection method and will be physically present at several points of time to observe my intercultural experience.
- The presentation of the research will not identify me in any way. My name, as well as any information which could identify me, will be taken out of the final research paper and all presentation of the research (conferences and articles)
- I understand that this is a voluntary work and I have the right of withdrawal at any point of time.
- I understand that I am not required to answer any questions I do not wish to answer

Full Name:

Phone number (optional):

Email Address:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 5

Ethics Form

Department of
Education



FORM valid from 01/08/2015

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED RESEARCH MPhil/PhD

To be completed by the student and approved by the supervisor then submitted for approval by the Director of Studies before any data collection takes place. Before completing the form, students should read the guidelines published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), which are available in Moodle and at www.bera.ac.uk

Introduction

Full name of student: GUERRICHE, Amina	Student number: 159504897
Provisional title of your study: Intercultural Identity Development through Study Abroad Programmes : A Case Study of Algerian Students in Canterbury Christ Church University	
Justification for your study: Much of the literature on study abroad outcomes <u>focuses</u> on the linguistic proficiency gains. A smaller number of studies have looked at the influence of study-abroad <u>programmes</u> on attitude change towards different cultures, and very few on the impact on the students' intercultural identity. Such research on the impact on intercultural identity have taken Chinese, American, Australian, and European students as case studies. However, to date no research of this kind has taken Algerian students as a case. The proposed study will provide new insights on the possible impact that inter-group relations, social contact, and increased cultural exposure may have on the process of intercultural identity development of Algerian students overseas. Furthermore, all previous studies of Algerians have been conducted in contexts such as France, no such investigation has taken place in the United Kingdom. This constitutes my research gap. On the basis of the results of the study, recommendations for educational practice (including intercultural learning strategies) will be made with the aim of enhancing students' adaptability to new cultural settings.	

Participants

1. Who are the main participants in your research (such as interviewees, respondents)? The main participants are 10 Algerian students aged between 23-25 years old (5 males and 5 females) traveling abroad for the first time and taking part in a six months pre-session courses in Canterbury Christ Church University.

2. How will you find and contact these participants?	The participants are PhD laureate students sponsored by the Algerian government who later aim to obtain a full PhD scholarship such as the one I have. Some of the laureates have been in contact with me to provide them with details and guidance through the national contest and further needed paperwork for the scholarship. A key contact is Mme. Samia Ouizab the project manager at the university who has kindly accepted to facilitate my contact with the students in order to obtain their formal consent.
3. How and from whom will you obtain informed consent and communicate the right to withdraw?	I will obtain consent from the participants of the study by means of a formal letter of consent that they will sign. I will retain hard copies of this document, keeping them under lock and key for the duration of the project.
4. Have you approached any other body or organisation for permission to conduct this research?	No.
5. At what stages of your research, and in what ways will participants be involved?	The data collection stage will take place from November 2016 to April 2017 (i.e. throughout the length of the programme). The students will be interviewed at intervals on several points; I will be a participant observer during the study, being physically present with the participants in their intercultural interactions.
6. Have you considered how to share your findings with participants and how to thank them for their participation?	I will share a summary of my final research results with them and I will thank them formally in the acknowledgment section of the thesis document.


Acceptance and exploitation avoidance, confidentiality, privacy and accuracy

7. How will you present the purpose of your research? Do you foresee any problems?	A summary of the study will be given to the participants both orally and written prior to any data collection. No problems are foreseen at this stage.
8. In what ways might your research cause harm (physical or psychological distress or discomfort, or threat to self-esteem) to yourself or others? What will you do to minimise this? Would access to support be available (if appropriate)?	The participants are mature adults who will be made aware of the research aims and purposes. In that they are themselves aiming to be PGR students in UK universities, they are very aware, understanding and willing to help in the process. As a participant observer I will be conducting my interviews in a sensitive manner that will ensure that they feel at ease, comfortable and respected.
9. What measures are in place to safeguard the identity of participants and locations? Are there special circumstances for consideration e.g. special populations such as children under 16 years?	The data that is collected would be stored in my computer under lock and key. Several back-up copies will be made to ensure that data is preserved in a secured way. The students' own names will not be revealed in the study: they will be referred to as pseudonyms. Only the gender and nationality will be retained as identifiers.
10. How will you record information faithfully and accurately?	

I will do so through digital audio recordings of the interviews and full transcription of these, I will also take extensive field notes from the observations and I will keep a reflexive journal.

11. Any additional information: N/A.



Student:	Signature: Amina Guerriche Date: 11/02/2016
Lead supervisor:	Signature:  Date: 2 nd November 2016
Director of Studies:	Signature:  Date: 2/11/2016

A copy of this form to be placed in [1] the student file, and [2] an Ethics Approval File held by the Director of Studies. The Director of Studies will report annually to the Department's Research Committee on ethical issues of particular interest that have been raised during the year.

